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PRECIOUS STONES IN THE MIDDLE-ENGLISH VERSE OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY, I.

BY P. J. HEATHER, Ph.D.

MANY difficulties will be met by the collector of anthropological material, more especially if he is concerned with ideas rather than with physical features and measurements. Differences of race, differences of language, differences of culture, between the observer and the observed, all tend to produce difficulties; and the observer's task becomes increasingly hard, if two or all three of these elements are alien to his own. If then, in anthropological study, a choice is made of our own ancestors as the observed, those difficulties which are caused by race and language will be removed; and only those will remain that are the effect of the change of culture which has taken place in our land since the period selected for study.

Middle-English verse of the fourteenth century offers a wide field for such a study. That century was a time of great literary activity, and over 200,000 lines remain of the production of verse of that period. This paper gives the result of an excavation of the soil of a small corner of this wide field, and a good deal of work has been expended in surveying the same stratum throughout the whole field. If excavation of other parts were undertaken, the results of

dealing on similar lines with such subjects as animals, herbs, colours, and many more could be given.

Then, if the literary strata of other centuries, earlier and later, were treated by the same method, the history of belief ought to be made clearer owing to the absence of the two confusing elements, difference of race and difference of language: and knowledge of the development of culture in our own country should grow accordingly. The tracing of custom and belief in our language from century to century may well give an insight into the growth and progress of mental habits among our own people that will serve usefully in a survey of other races.

It will be useful to consider some special points before studying the material at our disposal.

The first point is the meaning of the word "folklore." It was coined in 1846 by the late W. J. Thoms to replace the earlier expression "popular antiquities." The people's lore is more often sought in oral communication with them than in the printed page. But, in the first place, oral communication with the people of the fourteenth century is no longer possible; and, in the second place, the meaning of the word "folk" has changed since that period.

The change in meaning that the word "folk" has undergone can be illustrated from a work like Barbour's *Bruce*. In that book the word "folk" is used for the people generally, and all, gentle and simple, who follow the Bruce to battle, are his folk. There is no division of the people into "folk" and cultured people. This use is general, for in many other Middle-English poems the word is used, in a like manner, to include the whole populace.

It will be seen that, as a consequence, it is impossible to classify customs referred to in the poems of the fourteenth century into customs of the folk and customs of the cultured. The poorer classes in that century expressed themselves but little, and were but little described by contemporary authors, so that we must not expect to find much about

the folk customs of the period, if we limit the word "folk" according to the recent definition. There is, indeed, a description of a country cottage in Chaucer's *The Nonne Preestes Tale*: and one of a poor dwelling in town in the pages of Froissart; more can be found out about the habits and feelings of peasants and the poor from the *Piers Plowman* poems; but, when we have gathered all these items together, the collection is still meagre. There was, moreover, at the time, no distinction established between the beliefs held by the folk and those held by the educated or cultivated sections of the people. Such a distinction belongs to a far later date than the fourteenth century. And if, at the time, they did not distinguish, how can we, over five hundred years later, do so? To wait until a definite distinction could be established, would probably postpone to the Greek calends a piece of work which can usefully be done now. For the important thing is not to be able to say that such and such a custom was a "folk custom" in the fourteenth century. If the history of the idea underlying the custom can be traced through the centuries, useful work will have been done, whether it can definitely be laid down or not that the idea was held by the folk in any given period.

To record and compare the references in the Middle-English poems of the fourteenth century to all the customs and beliefs connected with precious stones that occur, will furnish the fullest expression of the lore of the whole people of that period on that subject. A starting point will be provided from which to trace the history of the customs and the beliefs that are found.

A second point to consider is that a practice, such as a medical remedy, is not in all cases in vogue throughout its whole history in one and the same class of society. The same practice may be found in one generation or century in force among the doctors, and in the next among the people. Miss C. S. Burne, some years ago, in her Presiden-

tial address to The Folk-Lore Society, remarked upon this point, and, in speaking of two remedies, commented on the one, "Here, then, we find the newest and most approved leechcraft of *that* day surviving in the folk medicine of *this*. . ."; and on the second,—“Here again, the folklore remedy of the present day was the property of the learned in times past. . .”¹

A third point is that the prevalence and width of appeal of customs and beliefs vary greatly. An ointment may be much or little used according as the herb or other base of the remedy is common and found locally, or rare and brought from afar. So with other customs. The use of precious stones would naturally be strictly limited in practice, as only the few would have the means of possessing them.

A fourth point is that all authors do not look at the world they are describing from the same standpoint. Take such works as the religious *Minor Poems* of the Vernon MS., the courtly *Confessio Amantis*, and the satiric *Piers Plowman*. The outlook in those three cases is quite different. The author of *Bevis of Hamton* again has much less regard for the custom of wearing precious stones than the author of *Guy of Warwick*; and any writer who borrows his theme from the Province of “Faërie” will be likely to describe customs quite different from those alluded to by another writer.

Stones and Nature.

1. *The Connection with Animals, Stars, and Plants.*—John Maplet, who was a naturalist of some repute, gave to the world in 1567 a book entitled *A Greene Forest*.² In it he wrote of gems

“other some are bred and found in the bodies and bellies of

¹ *Folk-Lore*, vol. xxii (1911), p. 28.

² *A Greene Forest* (1930), p. 22.

Foules, Fishes, creatures and Beasts of the Earth, Serpents . . .”

and in the sections referring to Todes Stone, Quandias, and Rubie he mentioned that they were found in the heads of Todes, Vultures, and Crabs. The Stone Dracontides, he said, was found in the Dragon's head, and the Stone Echites in the Eagle's nest. Beliefs such as these had been current in Western Europe for centuries. The story of Isidore of Seville in the seventh century and of Marbode of Rennes in the eleventh century, and of the lapidaries they wrote, is touched on in the Introduction to *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*,³ and in the translations into Anglo-Norman of the works of these two bishops that are given in that volume there are many references of a similar nature to those just quoted. We read in them of stones bearing names derived from those of animals,—Alectorias, Chelidonius, Chelonites, Crapodinus, Dracontites, Hyaenia, Lupi Dens, Lyncurium, Pantheros, Pierre de Corf: we read, too, of stones connected in other ways with the animal world: of the Aetites, found in the Eagle's nest: of the Adamas, that it is so hard that it cannot be reduced by ordinary means, but is melted by goat's blood: of the Margarita, engendered in the “mosle”: of the Smaragdus, one kind of which is taken by the Arimaspi from the “grifuns,” a bird “granz e feluns.”

As the manuscripts from which these references are derived date from the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, and had a large circulation, if the number of MSS. still extant is a safe guide in this respect, it may be taken for granted that their contents were well known in England, as the language, Anglo-Norman, would present no difficulties to an important section of the inhabitants of this country. It is, therefore, somewhat curious that we find but few references in Middle-English verse to such beliefs.

³ P. Studer and Miss Joan Evans, *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* (Paris, 1924), Intro, pp. x-xv.

Gower, in his *Confessio Amantis*, has,—

“ A Serpent, which that Aspidis
Is cleped, of his kynde hath this,
That he the Ston noblest of alle
The which that men Carbuncle calle,
Berth in his hed above on heihte,” ⁴

thus connecting the ruby with the serpent ; and, in another part of the same work, he tells the story of Adrian and Bardus, in which he says that the serpent let fall from her mouth a stone brighter than crystal, as a gift for Bardus.

Gower also relates in his Tale of Jason and Medea how the stone in the ring given by Medea had many properties, among them the power of killing the dragon.

“ It daunteth ek the cruel beste.” ⁵

Chaucer, too, uses precious stones as similes, in his description of the cock in the *Nonne Preestes Tale*.

“ His comb was redder than the fyn coral,

His bile was blak, and as the jeet it shoon.” ⁶

In the story of *Barlaam and Josaphat* we have two speeches of a bird recorded :—

“ I wis þu dedist gret folyze : þo þu leet me go,
Ffor among my gott^s : I have aryche ston,
Also gret as an ey3, : gret verteu is þer on ;
Hadde þu me slaue : and þt ston take,
Euere þu haddist be ryche : for þe ston^s sake ;
But for þu hast þe ston lore : I wis þu hast mys do.
Þo þe mon þis herd, : sykir hym was ful wo,
And for þe lore of þis ston : he gan to syke sore,
And þou3te how3 he my3te : þe bird cacche more.” ⁷

⁴ *Conf. Am.* (*Complete Works*, vols. ii. and iii., 1901), Bk. i, 463-7.

⁵ *Conf. Am.*, Bk. v., 3567.

⁶ Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales* (*Complete Works*, 1913), *N.P. Tale*, A. 4049, 4051.

⁷ C. Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden* (Paderborn, 1875), 402-10.

and—

“A ston, so gret as an ey, : how myȝt in my wombe be ? ”⁸

All these references connect stones with animals, but there seems to be no direct borrowing here from the lapidaries, or from the sources from which they were derived.

We must not, however, conclude from this absence of record that the beliefs recorded in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* were unknown in England. They were widespread : and, though mention of them in Middle-English verse is not frequent, we find references in our literature to them at other periods. Thus, though there is no mention of toadstone in fourteenth-century verse, the belief about it which is recorded in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* reappears in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. We read of the toad, that it

“Wears yet a precious jewel in his head,”⁹

and the belief is more fully described in a volume of county folklore published by The Folk-Lore Society, where it is recorded that before the reformation there lived an old woman known as the Witch of Aldie,—

“Every herb she knew the vertue of ; and she had in her possession a stone, about the size of a pigeon's egg, which was obtained from the head of a toad. This stone had the miraculous power of healing all sorts of venomous bites and sores upon the human body. The surface of it, previous to being used, was as smooth as glass, but after having been put into boiling water, it became as rough as sandstone. It was then applied to the diseased part, and a cure followed. It was called the ‘Tode's Stane.’ ”¹⁰

Sir Thomas Browne, in his *Pseudodoxia*, discusses at

⁸ *Ib.*, 423.

⁹ *As You Like It*, Act ii., Sc. 1.

¹⁰ J. E. Simpkins, *County Folklore*, vol. vii. (*Fife etc.*), (1914), p. 357.

some length the question of the belief that the stone was to be found in the head of a toad :—

“ As for the stone commonly called a Toad-stone, which is presumed to be found in the head of that animal, we first conceive it not a thing impossible,” ¹¹

and sums up in the following words :—

“ All which considered, we must with circumspection receive those stones which commonly bear this name.” ¹²

So we see that the fact that no mention is made of a belief in fourteenth-century verse does not imply that the belief has not a sure place in the minds of the people.

The manner in which Shakespeare introduces the subject into a play has much in keeping with the spirit of John Maplet and of the fourteenth century, in that the belief is recorded without comment. But the seventeenth century is very far in these matters from the fourteenth, and such writers as Sir Thomas Browne are a long way removed from the ordinary contemporaries of Gower and Chaucer. The treatment of the subject in the *Pseudodoxia* accords more nearly with the methods of modern science.

We see then that the poetry of the fourteenth century contained but few references dealing with the relations of stones to animals.

Stones are, however, sometimes connected with nature in another direction, and we are indebted to Gower for the accounts he gives us of the twelve signs and the fifteen stars. In the first, which does not directly concern us, as there is no mention of gems, he divides the twelve signs into four parts, connected respectively with the East, West, South, and North. But in the second account he gives us some things that are most interesting for our present subject. In the introduction to his section about

¹¹ Sir T. Browne, *Pseudodoxia* (*Works*, Edinburgh, 1927), Bk. iii., chap. xiii.

¹² *Ib.*

the fifteen stars he expounds the Science of his day, as it related to Astronomy. Nectanabus, a great Magician, as well as an "Astronomien," instructed Alexander the Great in the meaning of the Stars. The principal points he sets forth are that diverse parts of nature effect diverse results, instancing fire and water. In like manner the stars are of diverse kinds and work sundry things

"To ous, that ben here underlinges." ¹³

Gower finishes his introduction with the statement that to each of the Fifteen Stars belong a herb and a stone:—

"Wherof men worchen many a wonder
To sette thing bothe up and under." ¹⁴

The list of the Fifteen Stars, with their Herbs and Stones, is as follows:—

<i>Herb</i>	<i>Stone</i>	<i>Star</i>
1. Anabulla	Carbunculum	Aldeboran
2. Fenele	Cristall	Clota or Pliades
3. Eleborum	Dyamant	Algol
4. Marrubium	Saphir	Alhaiot
5. Saveine	Berille	Canis Maior
6. Primerole	Achates	Canis Minor
7. Celidoine	Gorgonza	Arial
8. Lapacia	Honochinus	Ala Corvi
9. Salge	Amyraude	Alaezel
10. Planteine	Jaspe	Almareth
11. Cicorea	Adamant	Venenas
12. Rosmarine	Topazion	Alpheta
13. Aristologie (birthwort)	Sardis	Cor Scorpionis
14. Satureie (savory)	Crisolitus	Botercadent
15. Majorane	Calcedoine	Tail of Scorpio ¹⁵

The astronomy thus taught to Alexander differed but little from astrology, but one or two points should be

¹³ *Op. cit.*, Bk. vii., 1294.

¹⁴ *Ib.*, 1307-8.

¹⁵ *Ib.*, 1281-1438.

noticed. In six cases the stone is called "proper" to the star, and in a seventh the star "hath his vertu in the Ston." The "vertu" of the herb is also referred to. Whereas in most cases of the stones connected with animals the stone is thought to be taken from the head or body of the animal, in the case of the stars the connection seems to be not physical but symbolic. A further difference between the two classes is that the animal's name is often applied to the stone, while the star's name is in all fifteen cases different from the name of both stone and herb.

We have to thank Gower, too, for some more information about precious stones. In the same book of his *Confessio Amantis* in which he gives his account of the fifteen stars he also describes the Sun's crown :—

"Of gold glistrende Spoke and whiel
 The Sonne his carte hath faire and wiel,
 In which he sitt, and is coroned
 With brighte stones environed ;
 Of whiche if that I speke schal,
 Ther be tofore in special
 Set in the front of his corone
 Thre Stones, whiche no persone
 Hath upon Erthe, and the ferste is
 Be name cleped Licuchis ;
 That othre tuo be cleped thus,
 Astrices and Ceramius.
 In his corone also behinde,
 Be olde bokes as I finde,
 Ther ben of worthi Stones thre
 Set ech of hem in his degre :
 Whereof a Cristall is that on,
 Which that corone is set upon
 The seconde is an Adamant ;
 The thridde is noble and avenant,
 Which cleped is Ydriades.
 And over this yit natheles
 Upon the sydes of the werk,

After the wrytinge of the clerk,
 Ther sitten fyve stones mo :
 The smaragdine is on of tho,
 Jaspis and Elitropius
 And Dendides and Jacinctus.
 Lo, thus the corone is beset,
 Wherof it schyneth wel the bet ;
 And in such wise his liht to sprede
 Sit with his Diademe on hede
 The Sonne schynende in his carte." ¹⁶

It is not surprising that we find no other record of the two stones that are first named ; but it is tempting to consider Ceramius as a corruption of Ceraunius : if we could do so, we should be dealing, in the case of the third stone mentioned, with the " thunderbolt " which finds a place in several of the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*.¹⁷ There we read that it is formed by the action of wind on rain, which produces a pebble, sharp as a barbed arrow, which falls with lightning and serves as a protection for house, and field, and ship against lightning : it also gives victory in battle, and good dreams. Against this identification, of course, is to be set Gower's plain statement that no person on earth has the three stones he names. Six of the other stones recorded in the Sun's crown are more certainly to be traced. The Crystal, Adamant, Smaragdine, Jaspis, Elitropius, and Jacinctus are well known, and only the Ydriades and Dendides are not mentioned under these names in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*.

Before leaving the subject of the connection of gems with nature, some beliefs concerning beryl from the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* may be set down and compared with the herb and stone proper to the fifth of Gower's fifteen stars.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, Bk. vii., 815-47.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, F.F.V., 585-98 : V.A., 679-84 : F.P., xxiii. : S.P., xxxvii. : C.V., xxvii. : A.L., xx.

In the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* it is stated that if an engraved beryl is set in a ring with some "savine" the man or woman who wears that stone on betrothal will never feel anger towards the wife or husband. The wearer will overcome all men. He can cure his eyes if they pain him, and the stone avails generally for illness.¹⁸

Gower gives Berille as the "propre Ston" of Canis Maior:—

"His propre Ston is seid Berille,
Bot forto worche and to fulfille
Thing which to this science falleth
Ther is an herbe which men calleth
Saveine, and that behoveth nede
To him that wole his pourpos spede."¹⁹

These two references seem to connect Middle-English verse with the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* more closely than any others.

2. *Properties and Qualities of Stones*.—References to many of the natural properties of precious stones are also to be found. In the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* which, as we have seen, were earlier generally than our period, cause and effect are set out in the plainest language. The properties of stones affect men and women in many directions: in their eating and drinking, in their buying and selling, their travelling, their fighting and lawsuits, their dreams and sleep, their riches and poverty, their luck or ill-luck, in any or all of these matters, men and women may be helped or hindered by the properties of precious stones. In the ordinary way, they would be helped, but occasionally two precious stones may have diametrically opposite properties.

Again, a man in his moral qualities may be improved, or the reverse. Folly and counsel, fear and courage, friendship and enmity, good and evil, joy and sadness, anger and

¹⁸ *Ib.*, F.E., 1.

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, Bk. vii., 1349-54.

concord, love and hatred, truth and lying, treachery, may be increased or diminished by the possession, the wearing, or the presence of a stone.

If a man wishes to walk invisible, if he wishes to become handsome, or have the gift of eloquence, or be pleasing to his lord, if he wishes to be a successful thief or to be protected against thieves, or to escape from prison, if he wishes to know the future or to be secure from drowning, he can obtain valuable help, if he possesses precious stones and has the requisite knowledge of how to use them aright. This knowledge can be gained from the Lapidaries.

A few of these points can be illustrated from the verse of the fourteenth century. Some stones, we have said, have the property of conferring invisibility. In *Ywaine and Gawin* we read how the damsel Lunet gives to Ywaine her ring :—

“ Als the bark hilles the tre,
Right so sal my ring do the ;
When thou in hand has the stane,
Der sal thai do the nane,
For the stane es of swilk myght,
Of the sal men have na syght.” ²⁰

The damsel thus gives Ywaine the ring, with the object of preserving him from the sight of his enemies. The name of the stone is not given, but we can refer to the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* and there find a description of Achates that resembles this. We there read :—

“ Kar qui la porroit trover et avoir et la tenist en sa main,
il porroit faire che qu’il vauroit, et prendre et enporter sans
estre coneus ne ravisés.” ²¹

The intention is quite different in the two cases. In *Ywaine and Gawin* the safety of the wearer is the object

²⁰ J. Ritson, *Ancient English Metrical Romancees* (1802), *Ywaine and Gawin*, 741-6.

²¹ *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, T.P., ix., 9-12.

which the damsel had in view; in the description of the Achates, the stone is part of a thief's stock-in-trade.

But other stones besides Achates possess similar properties. Thus, if you find a hyacinthus engraved with a figure half woman and half fish you are told to mount the stone in good gold. Put the ring on your finger, cover the stone with wax, hold it tightly in your fist and you will be seen of no man.²²

Further information of a like nature is given about heliotropium and about opalus. So we see that the stone that confers invisibility upon the wearer was well known to those who lived in the middle ages.

The passage which describes the "vertu" of the stone given by Lunet is not the only one in the poem of *Ywaine and Gawin* which tells of the properties possessed by precious stones. Further on we read that the lady of the damsel gives to Ywaine a ring, in which is a stone endued with other properties :—

" And i sal lene to yow my ring,
That es to me a ful der thing,
In nane anger sal ye be,
Whils ye it have and thinkes on me.
I sal tel to yow onane
The vertu that es in the stane :
It es, na preson yow sal halde,
Al if your fase be many falde ;
With sekenes sal ye noght be tane ;
Ne of your blode ye sal lese nane ;
In batel tane sal ye noght be,
Whils ye it have and thinkes on me ;
And ay, whils ye er trew of love,
Over al sal ye be above ;
I wald never for nakyn wight,
Lene it ar unto na knyght,
For grete luf i it yow take,
Yemes it wele now for my sake." ²³

²² *Ib.*, F.E., xxxvii.

²³ J. Ritson, *op. cit.*, 1527-44.

We can leave aside the absence of anger conferred by the ring on the wearer, because no mention of the stone has yet been made in the poem. But five properties are expressly attributed to the stone itself. Its "vertu" is, firstly, that no prison can hold you, even if your foes are many; secondly, it serves as an amulet against sickness; thirdly, you shall lose no blood; fourthly, you shall not be taken in battle; and, lastly, you shall overcome all. The condition imposed is that the owner must think on the giver, and be true of love.

Turn to the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* and we shall find five stones mentioned as being potent for delivering man out of prison, or unloosing bolts, fetters, or chains. They are Sapphirus, Amethystus, Gagates, Opalus, and Pierre de Corf.

The health-giving properties of stones and their usefulness in battle will be dealt with in the Sections referring to Health and Armour.

Passing on to the last power mentioned as being conferred by the stone, we find that the wearer who thinks of the giver shall be above all. At first this seems to be the same property as that of being useful for battle, but reference to the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* brings out the fact that many stones are useful for bringing success in lawsuits, and for helping the wearer in other ways than in battle against his enemies. One account of Pantheros tells that—

"Ki la veit le matin, ja le jor n'iert vencuz en bataille ne en nule afere." ²⁴

This poem, therefore, can be seen to be full of the spirit of the old lapidaries, and the belief in magic properties which forms a prominent feature in the story told is quite in keeping with what we read in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*.

²⁴ *Op. cit.*, F.P., xxxix., 3-4.

We find in this same poem other references to the properties of stones. The power to bring on a storm is not frequently referred to in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, though we read there of Heliotropium by means of which one can produce thunder, lightning, and tempest.²⁵

But in the lapidaries generally the connection of gems with meteorology by no means ends there. You can tell by using the topaz whether the moon that is coming will be dry or rainy. Emerald serves as an amulet against tempest in the house where it is kept, and corallium possesses the same property. After reading of these properties, we can feel that the following passages in *Ywaine and Gawin*, referring to the stone that produces tempest, lightning, and hail, reflect very faithfully the spirit of an earlier age :—

“ By the well standes a stane,
Tak the bacyn sone onane,
And cast on water with thi hand,
And sone thou sal se new tithand.
A storme sal rise, and a tempest.”²⁶

“ An amerawd was the stane,
Richer saw I never nane,
On fowr rubyes on heght standand,
Thair light lasted over al the land ;
And when i saw that semely syght,
It made me bath joyful and lyght ;
I toke the bacyn sone onane,
And helt water opon the stane :
The weder wex than wonder blak,
And the thoner fast gan crak.”²⁷

“ The chapel, the bacyn and the stone.”²⁸

“ Than to the well he rade gude pase,
And doun he lighted in that place,

²⁵ *Ib.*, A.L. 741-58.

²⁶ J Ritson, *op. cit.*, 333-7.

²⁷ *Ib.*, 361-70.

²⁸ *Ib.*, 562.

And sone the bacyn has he tane,
And kest water upon the stane,
And sone thar wex, withowten fayle,
Wind, and thonor, and rayn, and haile." ²⁹

"The king kest water on the stane,
The storme rase ful sone onane,
With wikked weders kene and calde
Als it was byfore-hand talde ; " ³⁰

"*Sir Ywayne comes to the well—*
And when he loked on the stane
He fel in swowing sone onane," ³¹

"Her fair thorn, hir riche stane ! " ³²

"He kest water upon the stane," ³³

There are other properties which are mentioned in certain of the poems of the period.

The pearl does not become dull so long as it is well kept :—

"ȝet þe perle payres not whyle ho in pyese lasttes
& if hit cheue þe chaunce vncheryst ho worþe,
ȝat ho blyndes of ble in bour þer ho lygges,
No-bot wasch hir wyth wourchyp in wyn as ho askes,
Ho by kynde schal becom clerer þen are ; " ³⁴

The chalcedony is without flaw :—

"Þe calsydoyne þenne withouten wemme," ³⁵

The beryl and pearl are also flawless :—

"As þe beryl bornyst byhoueȝ be clene,
ȝat is sounde on vche a side & no sem habes,
With-uten maskle oþer mote as margerye perle." ³⁶

The crystal in the Pseudo-Chaucerian *Romaunt of the*

²⁹ *Ib.*, 619-24.

³⁰ *Ib.*, 1291-4.

³¹ *Ib.*, 2063-4.

³² *Ib.*, 2094.

³³ *Ib.*, 3841.

³⁴ R. Morris, *Early English Alliterative Poems*, (E.E.T.S., O.S. I, 1864), *Cleanness*, 1124-8.

³⁵ *Ib.*, 1002.

³⁶ *Ib.*, 554-6.

Rose reflects a hundred hues in the rays of the sun ; and forms the mirror perilous in which Narcissus looked :—

“ Than taketh the cristal stoon, y-wis,
Agayn the sonne an hundred hewes.” ³⁷

“ This is the mirour perilous,
In which the proude Narcisus,” ³⁸

The crystal, again, is pre-eminently the clear stone :—

“ That lady es ful gent and small
Hir yghen cler als es cristall ; ” ³⁹

The place of origin of precious stones is given in two works, *Cursor Mundi* and *Owain Miles*. It is said of Asia :—

“ It es þe best, for þar in es
Bath haly land and hethyennes,
Precius stans and spice of prise,” ⁴⁰

while of the four rivers we read :—

“ Fison men clepeth that other Y wis
That is of miche more priis
Of stones in the grounde ” ⁴¹

“ The ferth strem is Tigris
In the world is make nis
Of stones swithe bright ” ⁴²

Paradise is mentioned as a source in another part of *Cursor Mundi* :—

“ Þei bring o paradis þe stan,
Sua preciose es fundun nan.” ⁴³

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, 1576-7.

³⁸ *Ib.*, 1601-2.

³⁹ J. Ritson, *op. cit.*, 899-900.

⁴⁰ R. Morris, *Cursor Mundi*, (Cotton MS.), (E.E.T.S., O.S. 57, 59, 62, 66, 68, 1874-92), 2101-3.

⁴¹ Laing and Turnbull, *Owain Miles*, (Edinburgh, 1837), 16-8, p. 42.

⁴² *Ib.*, 22-4, p. 42.

⁴³ *Cursor Mundi*, 1039-40.

While the author of *Ypotis* tells us that the fourth heaven is full of precious stones :—

“ Þe þridde heuene semeþ cristal,

.

Þe feorþe heuene is gold iliche,

Ful of precious stones riche ; ⁴⁴

The presence of precious stones provided a test of chastity according to two writers, the authors of *Florice and Blaunche flour* and of *Barlaam and Josaphat* :—

“ The strem com fram Paradis
The grauel in the grounde of precieuse stone
And of vertu iwis echone
Of saphires and of sardoines
Of oneches and of calsidoinen
Nou is the waie of so mochel eye
3if the cometh ani maiden that is forleie
And hi bowe to the grounde
For to waschen hire honde
The water wille 3elle als hit ware wode
And bicom on hire so red so blod,” ⁴⁵

and :—

“ Þer fore I nele þy ston se, : lest he me harm do ;
To my lord I wille go : & do þe hym come to :
Þan my3tow þy fayre ston : schewe ry3t so.” ⁴⁶

In this section, it remains to quote two passages referring generally to the “ vertu ” of stones and herbs :—

“ Wo worth the faire gemme vertulees !
Wo worth that herbe also that dooth no bote ! ” ⁴⁷

⁴⁴ C. Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden*, (Heilbronn, 1881), *Ypotis*, 65, 69-70.

⁴⁵ D. Laing, *A Penni Worth of Witte* (Abbotsford Club, 1857), 293-303.

⁴⁶ C. Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden* (Paderborn, 1875), 274-6.

⁴⁷ Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, ii, 344-5.

and :—

“ In Ston and gras vertu ther is,
Bot yit the bokes tellen this,
That word above alle erthli thinges
Is vertuous in his doinges.” ⁴⁸

A very similar statement to this last is to be found in *Les Lapidaires français du moyen âge*, by L. Pannier. In *Le Lapidaire en vers*, the MS. of which dates from 1265, we read :—

“ Que Diex n'ait mis vertus em pierres
Et en verbes et en parole,” ⁴⁹

then we have the property of the adamant (magnet)

“ Right as an adamaunt, y-wis
Can drawn to him sotilly
The yren,” ⁵⁰

and finally the hardness of the diamond :—

“ The stoon was hard as ademant,” ⁵¹

and—

“ Have herte as hard as dyamaunt,
Stedefast, and nought pliaunt.” ⁵²

The references in *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* to the hardness of this stone have already been mentioned, but the idea that a diamond could be dissolved in goat's blood did not die with the centuries when the MSS. were produced. For there is a translation into English of the sixteenth century of Erasmus' sermon on the child Jesus, in which occurs the following sentence :—

“ The adamante melteth with gootes mylke ” ⁵³

where mylke, as the Editor, the Rev. J. H. Lupton, points out, represents the Latin sanguine.

⁴⁸ Gower, *op. cit.*, Bk. vii., 1545-8.

⁴⁹ L. Pannier, *Les Lapidaires français du moyen âge*, (Biblio. de l'École des Hautes Études, Paris, 1882), p. 239, vv. 52-3.

⁵⁰ *Romaunt of the Rose*, 1183-5.

⁵¹ *Ib.*, 4181.

⁵² *Ib.*, 4385-6.

⁵³ D. Erasmus, *A sermon on the Child Jesus*, (1901), p. 16.

3. *Shining*.—But the property of precious stones which is most frequently referred to in the verse of the period, which we are examining, is that of shining, not by a reflected light, but by a light of their own. The belief in this property is very clearly brought out in the *Romaunt of the Rose*, where the Ruby is spoken of :—

“ Upon the tresses of Richesse
Was set a cercle, for noblesse,
Of brend gold, that ful lighte shoon ;
So fair, trowe I, was never noon.
But he were cunning, for the nones
That coude devysen alle the stones,
That in that cercle shewen clere ;
It is a wonder thing to here.
For no man coude preyse or gesse
Of hem the valewe or richesse.
RUBYES there were, saphyres, jagounces ;
And emeraudes, more than two ounces.
But al bifore, ful sotilly,
A fyn carboucle set sough I,
The stoon so cleer was and so bright,
That, al-so sone as it was night,
Men mighte seen to go, for nede,
A myle or two, in lengthe and brede.
Swich light (tho) sprang out of the stoon,
That Richesse wonder brighte shoon,
Bothe hir heed, and al hir face,
And eke aboute hir al the place,” ⁵⁴

where the words “ night ” and “ sprang out of the stoon ” make it certain that there is no question here of reflected sunlight.

A passage of Chaucer, from the *Legend of Good Women*, witnesses to this property of the ruby :—

“ Ne juwel, fretted ful of riche stones,
Ne sakkes ful of gold, of large wighte
Ne ruby noon, that shynede by nighte.” ⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, 1107-28.

⁵⁵ *Op. cit.*, 1117-9.

The palace in the land of faërie possessed a carbuncle, though it is not made clear that this particular stone shone at night :—

“ On þe front stod a charbokel ston :
Ouer al þe contre it schon,
Wiþ-outen eni doute.” ⁵⁶

It is possible that it shone with the light of faërie.

In one of the *Ave Marias* of the Vernon MS. the same property is recorded :—

“ Charbokel neuer so cler schone
As 3e schyne in cristes see ⁵⁷

While, in *Ywaine and Gawin*, we read :—

“ On fowr rubyes on heght standand,
Thair light lasted over al the land ; ” ⁵⁸

Earlier evidence from the thirteenth century exists about the clear shining of the ruby. In *Havelok*, the following reference to the cross of light on Havelok's back occurs :—

“ It sparkede, and ful brith shon,
So doth þe gode charbucle ston,
Þat men Mouthe se by þe lith
A peni chesen, so was it brith.” ⁵⁹

The *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, too, contain references to the ruby :—

“ De sa clarté la noit resplent,
Mais le jur n'en fera neient.” ⁶⁰

“ et vous di ke ki metroit le rubin fin en une sale par nuit sans

⁵⁶ Reinbrun, *Gij sone of Warwike*, (E.E.T.S., Extra S. xlii., xlix., lix., 1883-91), 80., l. 7-9.

⁵⁷ *Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, (E.E.T.S., O.S. 98, 117, 1892-1901), p. 137, *A third Hail Mary*, 105-6.

⁵⁸ J Ritson, *op. cit.*, 363-4.

⁵⁹ W. W. Skeat, *The Lay of Havelok the Dane*, (E.E.T.S., Extra S. iv., 1868), 2144-7.

⁶⁰ *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, F.F.V., 521-2.

lumiere, qu'i geteroit ausi grant resplendeur comme une candoille." ⁶¹

"Par trestut ou ele est, si done lumere." ⁶²

The note in Studer and Evans on the passage from the Third Prose version states that—

"The belief in its incandescence was very common in the Middle Ages." ⁶³

Reference to the ruby is made by Sir Thos. Browne, when he raises his voice in question :—

"Whether a Carbuncle," he says, "(which is esteemed the best and biggest of Rubies) doth flame in the dark, or shine like a coal in the night, though generally agreed on by common Believers, is very much questioned by many . . . wherefore although we dispute not the possibility, and the like is said to have been observed in some Diamonds, yet whether herein there be not too high an apprehension, and above its natural riancy, is not without just doubt." ⁶⁴

We shall see that not only the ruby but other precious stones were believed to possess the property. For of the Chrysoprasus we read :—

"et par nuit dunet clartét, cume fu " ⁶⁵

"Par nuit luist mult cler la pierre,
De jorz pert tote sa lumire ;
La nuit luist, palist le jor." ⁶⁶

"La noit cume fou esclarzist,
Lu jur en or s'ensevelist.
Pur ce si chiange la nature
K'al jur est clere, la noit obscure." ⁶⁷

⁶¹ *Ib.*, T.P., i. 5-7.

⁶² *Ib.*, P.F., viii., 9-10.

⁶³ *Ib.*, p. 348.

⁶⁴ *Pseudodoxia*, Bk. ii., chap. v., sec. 8.

⁶⁵ *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, F.P., xlviii., 2-3.

⁶⁶ *Ib.*, C.L., 1345-7.

⁶⁷ *Ib.*, F.F.V., 935-8.

Of the Aimant :—

“ Co nus demustre l'aimant :
Deus ot en tere itel semblant
Ki en la nuit done luur.” ⁶⁸

It is stated of the Gagates :—

“ Luisant est e nere e legere ; ” ⁶⁹
and—
“ Cil d'Engleterre luist assez,” ⁷⁰

Two other stones may be mentioned, the Chrysolithus :—

“ Dedenz ad un grein d'or en mileu
Ky estencele cume feu.” ⁷¹

and the Alerites :—

“ Alerites est une pierre,
Enclos ad en sei sa lumere ;
Si est faite cume ço fust
.
Tut le mund enluminera,
Pur ceste pere, qui l'avra.” ⁷²

In connection with this property, stones, other than the ruby, are not named in the fourteenth-century verse : but references to shining by night and shining like the sun are to be found in other poems. The author of *Guy of Warwick* furnishes confirmation :—

“ Ther-with myȝt men se anyȝt,
As yf hyt had be the day lyȝt.” ⁷³

And in *Sir Orpheo* we find another confirmation :—

“ Hit schone so fayr by nyght
That al the towne therof was lyght.

⁶⁸ *Ib.*, A.L., 1-3.

⁶⁹ *Ib.*, F.F.V., 424. (Cf. V.A., 130 ; F.P., xv., 3 ; T.P., xviii., 4.)

⁷⁰ *Ib.*, C.L., 457.

⁷¹ *Ib.*, V.A., 347-8.

⁷² *Ib.*, A.L., 153-5, 161-2.

⁷³ Zupitza, *The Romance of Guy of Warwick*, (E.E.T.S., Extra S., xlii., xlix., lix., 1883-91), (Caius), 10538-9.

The ryche stones schon so cun,
Al so bryght as ony sun." ⁷⁴

Pearl furnishes another example, though in this case there is no mention of shining by night :—

"Ʒe wal of Iasper Ʒat glent as glayre ; " ⁷⁵

A comparison of the shining of precious stones with the light of the sun is to be found in *Guy of Warwick* :—

"In Ʒe hilt was mani precious ston,
As bryzt as ani sonne it schon,
Wip-uten oƷ y-sworn." ⁷⁶

Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight :—

"Ho razt hym a riche rynk of red golde werkez,
Wyth a starande ston, stondande alofte,
Ʒat bere blusschande bemez as Ʒe bryzt sunne ;
Wyt ze wel, hit wat3 worth wele ful hoge." ⁷⁷

and *Sir Orphee* :—

"All it was of precious stone,
As bryght as sunne for sothe it schone." ⁷⁸

While the gleam of precious stones is spoken of in *Pearl* :—

"For vche a pobbles in pole Ʒer pyzt
Wat3 Emerad, saffer oƷer gemme gent,
Ʒat alle Ʒe loze lemed of lyzt,
So dere wat3 hit adubbement." ⁷⁹

⁷⁴ J. Ritson, *op. cit.*, 355-8.

⁷⁵ R. Morris, *Early English Alliterative Poems*, (E.E.T.S., O.S. 1, 1864), 1025.

⁷⁶ Zupitza, *op. cit.*, (Auch), 164, l. 4-6.

⁷⁷ R. Morris, *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*, (E.E.T.S., O.S. 4, 1864), 1817-20.

⁷⁸ J. Ritson, *op. cit.*, 149-50.

⁷⁹ R. Morris, *Early English Alliterative Poems*, 117-20.

and in another *Ave Maria* of the *Vernon MS.* :—

“Heil modur of grace i calle þe þen
Schinyng as precious stones,”⁸⁰

It is evident, therefore, that there existed in Western Europe in the Middle Ages a well-defined belief that precious stones shone with a light of their own.

Early mention comes from another source. In the life of St. Brendan in the *Early South English Legendary* there is this line :—

“And of suete precieuse stones :
þat brigtte schynen and wyde.”⁸¹

Evidence of the continuation of the belief into the fifteenth century is afforded from Scotland by the *Gest Historiale of the Destruction of Troy* : thus, of an image it is written,—

“Dubbed ouer with dyamondes, þat were dere holdyn,
þat with lemys of light as a lamp shone : ”⁸²

Again, we have—

“ . . . and a proude flore
Rowchet all with cristall, clere as the sonne.”⁸³

while, of the tomb of Hector,—

“Hit was atirynt vmb the top all with triet stones,
Of all kyndes to ken, þat clerkes cold deuysel
þai lemet so light, þat ledes might se
Aboute midnyght merke as with mayn torches ;
And on dayes to deme, as by due sight,
As beamys of bright sun, þat braunchis olofte.”⁸⁴

Thus in earlier and later centuries, as well as in the

⁸⁰ C. Horstmann, *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, (E.E.T.S., O.S. 98, 117, 1892, 1901), p. 76, *Hail Mary*, 609-10.

⁸¹ *Early South English Legendary*, St. Brendan, xxxvi., 42.

⁸² Panton and Donaldson, *The 'Gest Hystoriale' of the Destruction of Troy*, (E.E.T.S., O.S. 59, 86 ; 1860, 1874), 1683-4.

⁸³ *Ib.*, 8385-6.

⁸⁴ *Ib.*, 8745-50.

fourteenth, the belief was current, and it was held commonly in lands where Anglo-Norman was spoken.

The belief is held to the present day in Africa if we can assume that the heirloom referred to by P. Amaury Talbot is a precious stone. He writes :—

“ The shrine of one of the household Jujus is enriched by an heirloom, the whereabouts of which it is perhaps well not to define more clearly, lest it should attract the attention of those for whom it would have other than anthropological interest. This is a mud figure with one eye in the middle of its forehead, which is a great Juju, since, according to the statement of natives, it enables the image to see by night and day, because it can shine in the dark.” ⁸⁵

Such language as has been quoted, might be thought to be due to poetical licence, but it seems rather to record a belief, such as that which exists in Nigeria, in a power inherent in precious stones, of shining, not as mere reflectors of daylight, but with a light of their own.

Scientific accuracy according to modern standards cannot, indeed, be expected in such statements, nor should too much stress be laid upon the actual words employed, which may be compared with the following lines from *Cursor Mundi* :—

“ þis castell es nogh for to hide,
 es painted a-bute þe vtter side
 O thre colurs o sun-dri heu,

 þe thrid ouermast of all
 þat þe kirlens ar paint wit-all,
 It castes lem ouer al sa bright,
 þat reches to þe dunjon light.” ⁸⁶

It might be urged that the poets, in making their many

⁸⁵ *Life in Southern Nigeria*, (1923), p. 274.

⁸⁶ *Cursor Mundi*, (Cotton MS.), 9911-3, 9923-6.

allusions to the shining of precious stones, are stating no more than the author of *Cursor Mundi* states about paint. Possibly the idea underlying the statement about paint in the *Cursor Mundi* is the same as that which gives rise to the attribution of light-giving properties, or is closely connected with it.

So far as we have considered the references we may come to the conclusion that what we possess of Middle-English poetry covers part of the ground explored in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, though there are many gaps in the verse we are reviewing. It is only natural that this should be so ; for many branches of man's activities which are dealt with in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* are hardly touched upon in Middle-English verse. The use of precious stones in agriculture, concerning which many references are to be found in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, is unrepresented in the Middle-English poems, and for the keeping of flocks and herds there are many suggestions in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* which do not figure in Middle-English verse.

It was quite to be expected, too, that, in this section, very little should be found that involves custom if we use that word to imply habitual acts. We may gather that it is quite an ordinary occurrence for a serpent to bear in his head a ruby. We have seen that it is quite normal for stones, rubies and others, to shed light around them even at night. But in many of the quotations the instances given are in connection with separate incidents in the story ; and "*une fois ne fait pas coutume.*" References to custom are wanting.

But on the other hand belief is present all along the line. When we read of the sun's chariot with its gems, or the connection between the stars and a series of precious stones, or of Medea's jewelled rings, or any other of the passages, a belief is implied on the part of the writer and may be taken for granted on the part of the reader. Belief

in the wonderful qualities and properties of stones is very prominent throughout.

We have already seen enough of the Middle-English verse to suggest to us a question :—Is there a better case for the mediæval view that avarice was at the base of the search for precious stones, or for the view that belief in their magic power gave rise to their employment.

Chaucer, in *The Former Age*, presents the first view :—

“ A blisful lyf, a paisible and a swete
 Ledden the peples in the former age ;

 What sholde it han avayled to werreye ?
 Ther lay no profit, there was no richesse,
 But cursed was the tyme, I dar wel seye,
 That men first dide hir swety bysynesse
 To grobbe up metal, lurking in darknesse,
 And in the riveres first gemmes soghte.
 Allas ! than sprong up al the cursednesse
 Of covetyse, that first our sorwe broghte ! ” ⁸⁷

Prof. W. Ridgeway sets out the second view in *A Companion to Latin Studies* :—

“ All races ascribe magical power to crystalline and other stones of striking form or colour, and employ them as potent amulets. In fact, jewellery like all ornament, has its origin in Magic rather than in Aesthetic. The objects used as jewellery all over the world at present amongst primitive peoples have invariably such an origin.” ⁸⁸

So far the modern view seems the truer : as more evidence is produced, we shall see whether it tends to confirm or to refute this present-day theory.

We find in this section a certain number of references to the purposes which the stones serve, either as amulets, or as working wonders, or as a test of chastity, but in leaving it we can place on record that, judging from the number of

⁷ *Op. cit.*, *Minor Poems*, ix.

⁸⁸ *Op. cit.*, (1910), p. 581.

references to the belief in the shining of stones, this power was the natural property that most forcibly struck the poets of the fourteenth century.

Stones and Healing.

The references to the subject of healing are not numerous. In the *Proces of the Seven Sages* we have a commonplace allusion to the gifts given to the leech as a reward for his services :—

“ The kyng yaf him mani a juel,
To the leche, of silver and goold,
Als mochel als he nime wold.” ⁸⁹

But there is good authority for the healing and prophylactic powers of precious stones. In the *Romaunt of the Rose* we read of the stone that would cure a man of palsy and of toothache :—

“ That hool a man it coude make
Of palasye, and of tooth-ake.” ⁹⁰

and again, in the lines immediately following, of the same stone that it would prevent blindness :—

“ And yit the stoon hadde suche a grace,
That he was siker in every place,
Al thilke day, not blind to been,
That fasting mighte that stoon seen.” ⁹¹

When, however, Chaucer tells us, in *Troilus and Criseyde*, of a stone that will restore dead men to life, he implies, with his quiet humour, that he himself puts no faith in such a miraculous property :—

“ Ye, nece myn, that ring moste han a stoon
That mighte dede men alyve maken ;
And swich a ring, trowe I that ye have noon.” ⁹²

⁸⁹ *Op. cit.*, 1098-100.

⁹⁰ *Op. cit.*, 1097-8.

⁹¹ *Ib.*, 1099-102.

⁹² *Op. cit.*, iii., 891-3..

Of the other references, one, from *Ywaine and Gawin*, tells of a stone that prevents sickness or loss of blood :—

“ The vertu that es in the stane :
It es, na preson yow sal halde,
Al if yowr fase be many falde ;
With sekenes sal ye noght be tane ;
Ne of yowr blode ye sal lese nane ;⁹³

Over forty stones are named in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* as being useful for restoring or maintaining bodily health. Some of these,—coralium, corneolus, heliotropium,—are good for stanching the flow of blood.

The last stone to be mentioned is more wonderful still, for not only does it give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, power to the halt, and wisdom to fools, but it also acts as a means of testing a man's life by way of ordeal. Any man, not being in clean life and seeing this stone, will be made blind or suffer worse harm.

“ Aryche marchaunt I am, : of ferne lond I wis ;
Apresyous ston I haue : þt zeueþ þe blinde syzt,
Deue men to here, : my ston haþ þt myzt,
Doume men for to speke, : halte men to goon,
Fol^s for to make wyse, : ne is þis a wondur stoon ?
Hedir I it haue brouzt, : for þe child^s sake ;
zif þu makist me speke wit hym, : I wole it hym be take.
þe child^s mayster answerid : : broþer, leet me se
& aproue þat stoon, : zif he soch be,
So þou hast me fore told ; : ffor erst, be my leute,
To take hym to iosaphat : tit þe no leue of me.
Do wey, quap þis good mon, : I swere be my sleue :
zif þu sey þ^t ston, : he þe wold greue ;
ffor, þey my ston in some kind : be boþe good & ryche
In an oþer kind he harmyþ, : I segge þe trewelyche :
He þat seþ my stoon : in clene lyf moot be,

& clene yȝen & gode haue, : or, I segge þe
 He hym wole make blind anon, : or don hym harm more ;
 & me þinkeþ to soþe : þt þyn yȝen beþ sore." ⁹⁴

The master answers,—

"þer fore I nele þy ston se, : lest he me harm do ;
 To my lord I wille go : & do þe hym come to ;
 þan myȝtow þy fayre ston : schewe ryȝt so." ⁹⁵

The list of healing properties which we have been able to compile from fourteenth-century verse has not been a long one. It is worth remark that the names of the stones we have been considering are not given.

The evidence we have brought together can, however, be supplemented by other evidence from the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*. In this some precious stones,—Alectorias, Onyx, Hyacinthus, Gagates, Aetites, Selenitis, Heliotropium,—have general power for healing. For the most part, however, the stones in the *Lapidaries* avail for particular diseases, some for dropsy, some for the eyes, and so on. The stone in the mordant of Richesse in the *Romaunt of the Rose* can be placed by the side of the corresponding remedy in the Anglo-Norman MSS. The stone is called a remedy for palsy. This can be paralleled by Sapphirus.⁹⁶ It is again a remedy for toothache, like Gagates, Corallium, Galactites, given in the Alphabetical Lapidary.⁹⁷ In the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, too, the Achates strengthens the sight.⁹⁸ The Jaspis and the Sapphire improve the sight,⁹⁹ ¹⁰⁰ and many other stones are mentioned as having similar properties.

In this section the references fail to some extent, for, although the use of precious stones for the purpose of

⁹⁴ C. Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden*, (Paderborn, 1875), 252-70.

⁹⁵ *Ib.*, 274-6.

⁹⁶ *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, V.A., 449-50.

⁹⁷ *Ib.*, A.L., 1113-8, 579-94, 1089-90.

⁹⁸ *Ib.*, F.P., ii., 8 ; S.P., x., 6 ; C.L., 91-2.

⁹⁹ *Ib.*, A.P., 17.

¹⁰⁰ *Ib.*, V.A., 445.

healing is evidently well known and needs no special explanation, yet the number of passages is so small that we may imagine that the leeches of the period more often used other means for their work.

The Romaunt of the Rose, *Ywaine and Gawin*, *Proces of the Seven Sages*, and *Barlaam and Josaphat* do not constitute a long list of sources for the use of an important, if costly, means of healing.

We have, certainly, found some references to the amuletic properties of stones, but nothing that compares in frequency with the references to shining which we have already mentioned in the previous section.

We may claim, however, that enough references exist to make it plain that belief existed in the power of precious stones to heal man.

Stones and Magic.

The practice of magic does not necessarily call for the use of costly materials to work the wonder it seeks to effect. The Rev. J. Roscoe, writing of *The Baganda*, says:—

“ A stick, or a plantain, or a fetich, over which incantations had been said, might be pushed into the thatch of a house, and would thereupon cause death to the inmates. Women often fell ill, and in some instances died, because an enemy had contrived to obtain some of the weeds which they had handled when digging or some of the earth which they had rubbed from their hoe, or a piece of string which they had used to tie the blade of their hoe to the handle, or again, a shred of their barkcloth which they had thrown down. These fragments would then be used to work magic upon, and the spell would either cause the woman to fall sick, or in some cases would kill her.” ¹⁰¹

Instances of a similar kind from present-day records could be multiplied.

There is nothing in this which would have appeared

¹⁰¹ *Op. cit.*, (1911), p. 344.

strange in the fourteenth century. We have only to turn to Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.¹⁰² In it he tells the story of how Medea, to renew the youth of Aeson, gathers the materials for her charms. He mentions many things,—herbs, sand, small stones, “with a thousand more things.” Gower has borrowed this part of the story from Ovid. Through the ages, such things do not seem to have changed much. It was, and is still, the manner in which the ingredients of magic medicines have been collected or prepared and their connection with the victim rather than the ingredients themselves which give efficacy to the products.

The very frequent use of mean materials does not, however, preclude the use of more precious things. Nor did it in the fourteenth century. Gower's tale of the renewing of the youth of Aeson follows on that of Medea and Jason,—the winning of the Golden Fleece. In this Medea gave Jason the ring :—

“ Tho tok sche forth a riche Tye
 Mad al of gold and of Perrie,
 Out of the which sche nam a Ring,
 The ston was worth al other thing.
 Sche seide, whil he wolde it were,
 Ther myhte no peril him dere,
 In water mai it noght be dreynt,
 Wher as it comth the fyr is queynt,
 It daunteth ek the cruel beste,
 Ther may no qued that man areste,
 Wher so he be on See or lond,
 Which hath that ring upon his hond ;
 And over that sche gan to sein,
 That if a man wol ben unsein,
 Withinne his hond hold clos the Ston,
 And he mai invisible gon.
 The Ring to Jason sche betauhte,”¹⁰³

In addition to this she gave him a “glu,” “of gret vertu.”

¹⁰² *Op. cit.*, Bk. v., 3927-4186.

¹⁰³ *Confessio Amantis*, Bk. v., 3559-75.

“And over that hir oignement,
Hir Ring and her enchantement
Ayein the Serpent scholde him were,”¹⁰⁴

We are not told that this ring was made full of “vertu” through the charms that had been pronounced over it. But in *William of Palerne* we read of a wer-wolf being restored to man’s shape by Queen Braunden:—

“þan stint sche no lenger · but bout stryf went
Into a choys chaumber · þe clerli was peinted,
þat non went hire with · but þe werwolf al-one.
þan rauzte sche forþ a ring · a riche & a nobul,
þe ston þat peron was stigt · was of so stif vertu,
þat neuer man vpon mold · miȝt it him on haue,
Ne schuld he with wicchecraft · be wicched neuer-more,
Ne per (i) sche with no poysoun · ne purliche enuenemed ;
Ne wrongli schuld he wiue · þat it in wold hadde.
þat riche ring ful redily · with a red silk þrede,
þe quen bond als bliue · a-boute þe wolwes necke.
Seþe feiþli of a forcer · a fair bok sche rauzt,
& radde þer-on redli · riȝt a long while,
So þat sche made him to man · in þat mene while,
As fair as fetys · and als freli schapen,
As any man vpon mold · miȝt on deuse.”¹⁰⁵

We see that the enchantment was going on while the ring was about the wer-wolf’s neck. Need we doubt that, in accordance with the general statement made by Gower about the “vertu” in stone and grass and word, the shape-shifting was due to the two processes together,—the wearing of the ring and the reading of the spell?

The reading of a spell was not the only way in which the “vertu” of a precious stone could be reinforced. Engraving was thought to improve the magical value of a stone, and we read of the use of engraved stones. Thus, Philip of Macedon, in his dream, which was due to Nectanabus’

¹⁰⁴ *Ib.*, 3613-5. ¹⁰⁵ W. W. Skeat, *The Romance of William of Palerne*, (E.E.T.S., Extra S. i., 1867), 4421-36.

magic, saw the god Amos take a ring with an engraved stone, and use it as a signet ring :—

“ Tok forth a ring, wherinne a ston
Was set, and grave therupon
A Sonne, in which, whan he cam nyh,
A leoun with a swerd he sih ; ” ¹⁰⁶

The brooch of Thebes, that Chaucer tells of, is also an instance of the use of magic in the preparation of jewels, for, although magic is not mentioned there need be no doubt that it was due to this “ that every wight that had it shuld have wo.” It is notable that it was the beauty of the brooch that made men covet it : and the vice of the maker that gave woe with the possession. Chaucer divides the blame between the “ worcher ” and the “ covetour.”

“ The broche of Thebes was of suche a kinde,
So ful of rubies and of stones Inde,
That every wight, that sette on hit an yë,
He wende anon to worthe out of his minde ;
So sore the beaute wolde his herte binde,
Til he hit hadde, him thoghte he moste dye ;
And whan that hit was his, than shulde he drye
Such wo for drede, ay whyl that he hit hadde,
That welnigh for the fere he shulde madde.
And whan hit was fro his possessioun,
Than had he double wo and passioun
For he so fair a tresor had forgo ;
But yet this broche, as in conclusioun,
Was not the cause of this confusioun ;
But he that wroghte hit enfortuned hit so,
That every wight that had hit shuld have wo ;
And therfor in the worcher was the vyce,
And in the covetour that was so nyce.” ¹⁰⁷

However much we allow for the records given in the quotations being only stories, yet we should not be justified

¹⁰⁶ Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, Bk. vi., 2145-8.

¹⁰⁷ Chaucer, *The Complaynt of Mars*, 245-62.

in refusing to admit that real belief in magic existed at the time when these poems were written. Trials for sorcery, such as are recorded in history, are very strong evidence that there was a belief in magic in the minds of the majority.

In spite of the scarcity of quotations from the poetry, we can appeal to other evidence on the subject. L. F. Salzman, in his *English Life in the Middle Ages*, says:—

“Reference has already been made to charms, and on much the same level were the mystic properties ascribed to various precious stones, the wearing of which was supposed to prevent or cure certain diseases. The sapphire in particular was believed to have curative powers; as an instance of this belief we find a man in 1391 leaving a ring with a sapphire to the priest of the chantry of St. James at Scarborough, “so that it may be available for all who desire the medical aid of the said ring.” ”¹⁰⁸

The quotations collected are almost without exception concerned with white magic. In nearly every case, the properties of the stone are beneficent, and the stones dealt with will deliver from prison, preserve from poison, and prevent or cure illness. It is true that in battle the stone which protects one warrior may very probably prove to be the bane of his opponent; but it is worthy of note that the romances, especially, dwell rather upon the protection of the one than upon the danger to the other implied by that protection.

In both an earlier period in England, and a later, the same tendency exists. Stones are regarded as possessing beneficent properties; and though they are very frequently used in connection with magic, there is no trace, generally speaking, of their being feared.

In the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, too, the same attitude towards gems is noticeable. In nearly every case they aid the wearer or the possessor. The use of precious stones as amulets is general: and very much the same feeling pre-

¹⁰⁸ *Op. cit.*, (1926), p. 184.

veiled generally among our ancestors as is spoken of, in particular, in the following passage from J. Roscoe, where he speaks of the god Nkulu :—

“ All classes of people went to him to obtain amulets called nzalo, which were worn by women round their waists, in order that they might have the power of fecundity.” ¹⁰⁹

Again, in *Life in Southern Nigeria*, by P. Amaury Talbot, helpful magic in Western Africa is referred to in the following terms :—

“ There are many magic medicines or Ibokk to protect people from the evil eye, from snake-bite, from the attacks of bush beasts, from ghosts, and from would-be robbers.” ¹¹⁰

These two passages recall many of the helpful properties possessed by gems, as given in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*. But nowhere in the fourteenth-century verse literature is there found a state of things depicted such as would justify the following quotations :—

“ Witchcraft (Ifott) is a very deep thing. Among our people there is nothing else so deep, and the dread of it darkens multitudes of lives.” ¹¹¹

In English verse of the fourteenth century this atmosphere of dread seems to be wanting. Perhaps the nearest analogy to it is to be found in works such as the *Pricke of Conscience*. We should indeed bear in mind that in the case of Africa we have a scientific record compiled by anthropologists belonging to a different people, while in the case of our verse we have poems written by men of our own country.

On another side of the question of magic, it may be remarked that, in the fourteenth century, there was not much separation between magical use and ordinary use. Thus, when we read that corallium was powdered and sprinkled over the vines or the wheat to keep them from tempest and lightning, the object in view is not so much

¹⁰⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 316.

¹¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

¹¹¹ *Ib.*, p. 57.

agriculture of a scientific nature, even as science was then understood, as magical use of the gem. When the further remark is added that doing this takes away enchantment, doubt as to whether magic use was intended is at once removed.¹¹²

We find enchantments also mentioned in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* in connection with Adamas,¹¹³ Capnitis,¹¹⁴ Dracontites,¹¹⁵ Sardius,¹¹⁶ Gagates,¹¹⁷ Magnes,¹¹⁸ Jaspis,¹¹⁹ Heliotropium,¹²⁰ Androdamas,¹²¹ and Anancitis.¹²² We find, too, sorcery connected with Topazium,¹²³ Gagates,¹²⁴ Sapphirus,¹²⁵ phantoms with Onyx,¹²⁶ Chrysolithus,¹²⁷ Chrysoprasus,¹²⁸ Amethystus,¹²⁹ Corallium,¹³⁰ and incubus with Molochites,¹³¹ and Lychnites,¹³² while other examples of the power of precious stones against enchantments or for causing enchantments could be quoted from the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*.

Perhaps in no other section is it more clearly brought out that it is the usefulness and not the display of the stones that underlies the writing of the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, thus showing that we can freely use the passages drawn from that source as representing the science of that day.

We may sum up the results gathered in this section by saying that, although, naturally, many of the stones referred to possess amuletic properties, these are so varied that we still find no single property so frequently mentioned as that of shining which was remarked in the section *Stones and Nature*. As in the section *Stones and Nature*, too, we find that belief is recorded, but that custom does not exist, the reason being that the cases quoted are individual examples of magic use, and do not refer to the habitual

¹¹² *Op cit.*, A.L., 381-90; S.P., xx., 6-9.

¹¹⁴ *Ib.*, A.L., 403-4.

¹¹⁷ *Ib.*, V.A., 145-7.

¹²⁰ *Ib.*, C.L., 765-8.

¹²³ *Ib.*, V.A., 335-6.

¹²⁶ *Ib.*, F.F.V., 284.

¹²⁹ *Ib.*, A.P., 267.

¹³² *Ib.*, A.L., 1307-8.

¹¹⁵ *Ib.*, A.L., 759-64.

¹¹⁸ *Ib.*, F.F.V., 457-8.

¹²¹ *Ib.*, C.L., 1167-8.

¹²⁴ *Ib.*, V.A., 672-3.

¹²⁷ *Ib.*, A.L., 543-4.

¹³⁰ *Ib.*, F.P., xvii., 9.

¹¹³ *Ib.*, F.F.V., 74.

¹¹⁶ *Ib.*, F.R., viii., 5-6.

¹¹⁹ *Ib.*, A.P., 32.

¹²² *Ib.*, A.L., 214.

¹²⁵ *Ib.*, S.P., ii., 25.

¹²⁸ *Ib.*, T.P., xxx., 3.

¹³¹ *Ib.*, C.L., 1263-6.

use of some particular remedy or to the habitual practice of magic by some magician.

Stones and the Individual.

There is evidence in passages which are found in the Vernon MS., in *The Canterbury Tales*, in the *Confessio Amantis*, and in *William of Palerne*, about various customs involving the use of gems for dower, the marriage ceremonies, gifts at marriages, to minstrels and others, for burial and the funeral pyre, and for their disuse in mourning. In regard to these, one feature is specially noticeable. It is this :—that, however many customs concerned with gems may have prevailed among the people in our period, it is chiefly those relating to burial and the other rites closely connected with this ceremony that the poetry of the century mentions.

There are some few connected with marriage, one from *Of Clene Maydenhod*, where it is mentioned that Christ asks for no dower, and precious stones are given as an example of valuables suited for dower :—

“ He askep wiþ þe · nouþer lond ne leode,
Gold ne seluer · ne precious stone—” ¹³³

Chaucer in the *Clerkes Tale* speaks of “gemmes clere” :—

“ Arrayed was toward hir mariage
This fresshe mayde, ful of gemmes clere ; ” ¹³⁴

in *William of Palerne*, good jewels are among the gifts made to minstrels, called together on the occasion of a wedding :—

“ . . . & ful stoute robes,
Gret garisun of gold. & greiþli gode iuweles.” ¹³⁵

gifts of precious stones are recorded in *Guy of Warwick* :—

“ þer wer giftes for the nones,
Gold, & siluer, & precious stones,
& druries riche and dere.” ¹³⁶

¹³³ C. Horstmann, *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, (E.E.T.S., O.S. 98, 117 ; 1892, 1901), 81-2.

¹³⁴ *Op. cit.*, 778-9. ¹³⁵ *Op. cit.*, 5072-3. ¹³⁶ *Op. cit.*, (Auch.), 16, l. 7-9.

while in the *Proces of the Seven Sages*, as we have already seen in *Stones and Healing*, gifts of jewels were made to the leche.

In connection with death and burial, Gower, in his *Tale of Iphis*, describes a rich tomb :—

“ And under that thei maden lowe
A tumberiche for the nones
Of marbre and ek of jaspres stones.” ¹³⁷

And in the *Tale of Tereus*, he speaks of the forsaking of pearls in the time of mourning :—

“ The Perles weren tho forsake
To hire, and blake clothes take ; ” ¹³⁸

In *Bevis of Hamton*, and in *Guy of Warwick*, reference is made to marble as the material of a chapel and a tomb respectively :—

“ Of sein Lauarauns he let arere
A faire chapel of marbel fin,” ¹³⁹

and—

“ A prou3 of marbel ston,” ¹⁴⁰

and the same material is given in Chaucer's *Prioresses Tale*,—

“ And in a tombe of marbul-stones clere
Enclosen they his litel body swete ; ” ¹⁴¹

Chaucer tells, too, of the shrine made for Antony by Cleopatra :—

“ But made hir subtil werkmen make a shryne
Of alle the rubies and the stones fyne
In al Egipte that she coude espye ; ” ¹⁴²

It is Chaucer, again, who gives us the story in the *Knights Tale* of the funeral pyre and the jewels cast into the fire.

“ Ne what jeweles men in the fyr tho caste,” ¹⁴³

¹³⁷ *Op. cit.*, Bk. iv., 3664-6.

¹³⁸ *Op. cit.*, Bk. v., 5723-4.

¹³⁹ E. Kölbing, *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, (E.E.T.S., O.S. xlv., xlviii., lxxv.; 1885-94), 4608-9.

¹⁴⁰ Zupitza, *op. cit.*, (Auch.), 296, l. 7, and (Caius), 11032.

¹⁴¹ *Op. cit.*, B., 1871-2. ¹⁴² *Op. cit.*, *Legend*, 672-4. ¹⁴³ *Op. cit.*, A, 2945.

and finally, "Buried in a marbel-ston" occurs (with different spelling) three times in the *Chronicle of England*, of the burial of kings.¹⁴⁴

Already Lazamon in the *Brut* had referred to gems in connection with burial in writing of Belin :—

"heo makeden ane tunne :
of golde and of zimme.
þene king heo duden þer inne." ¹⁴⁵

and of Nennius whom they buried

"mid golde and mid zimme : " ¹⁴⁶

while the *Early South English Legendary* tells how a king's brother dies and is prepared for burial :—

"In pourpre and cheisel and guode zimmes : ¹⁴⁷

In addition, in Lazamon, marble is given as the material for a tomb :—

"and d'gen ut þine banes alle :
of þene marme-stane." ¹⁴⁸

When we turn to the fifteenth century we find still many references to the use of precious stones in connection with death and burial. For the *Destruction of Troy* records their use for the tombs of the king of Messan :—

"And Thelaphus a toumbe trietly gart make,
A riche & a riall, with mony ronke stonys.
On a worschipfull wise warpit hym þerin,
With all the princes of þe prouyns, & other prowde
folke,
And sacrifices full solemne, soche as þai vsit.
He puruait a proude stone of a prise hoge,
His course for to couer clenly aboue." ¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ J. Ritson, *op. cit.*, 418, 484, 576.

¹⁴⁵ F. Madden, *Laʒamon's Brut*, (1847), 6080-2. ¹⁴⁶ *Ib.*, 7624.

¹⁴⁷ C. Horstmann, *op. cit.*, (E.E.T.S., O.S. 87, 1887), lvi., 188.

¹⁴⁸ F. Madden, *op. cit.*, 32096-7.

¹⁴⁹ *Op. cit.*, 5360-6.

of Patroclus :—

“ He aralet for þat Rioll, all of Riche stones,
A faire toumbe & a fresshe all of fre marbill.” 150

of Troilus :—

"A Sepulchre Solempne, set full of stones." 151

of Paris :—

“Pan in Iono ioly temple, as the iest tellis,
Atyret was a tabernacle, triet for þe nones,
Made all of marbill, of mason deuysel,
With mony staryng stone stondyng aboute.” 152

of Achilles :—

“ A Sepulchre solempne, set full of stonys ;

Pere þai tild vp a toure, triedly wrought,
Meruelously made with masons deuysse,
With Jemmes, & iuwells, & other ioly stonys." 153

The use of stones is also recorded for the funeral urns of Telamon and of Memnon :—

" . . . a gay vessel,
All glissonaund of gold & of good stones ; " 154

and :—

“ . . . a clere vessell,
All glyssonond of gold & of gay stones ; ” 155

while amber is mentioned in connection with the tabernacle for the embalming of Hector :—

“When this taburnacle atyrit was tally to end,
Thai closit hit full clanly, all with clene ambur,
Vmbe the borders aboue,” 156

The alliterative *Morte Arthure* gives crystal as the material for the covering of the tomb of Kayone :—

"The kors of Kayone the kene at Came es be-leufede,
Koueride with a crystalle clenly alle ouer ;" 157

¹⁵⁰ *Ib.*, 7157-8. ¹⁵¹ *Ib.*, 10478. ¹⁵² *Ib.*, 10780-3. ¹⁵³ *Ib.*, 10577, 10583-5.

¹⁵⁴ *Ib.*, 12290-1. ¹⁵⁵ *Ib.*, 13793-4. ¹⁵⁶ *Ib.*, 8813-5.

¹⁵⁷ E. Brock, *Morte Arthure*, (E.E.T.S., O.S. 8; 1871), 2380-1.

So, in the two poems, there are no fewer than nine examples of the custom of using precious stones for purposes of burial.

Again, the narrow scope of the verse references of the fourteenth century indicates that there is a gap in our evidence, and it will accordingly be a good thing to consider further evidence from the poetry, not connected specially with gems, in order to examine the attitude of the individual towards such matters as decoration and construction of his armour and his clothes, and the houses he visited.

This can conveniently be done by a series of quotations from *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*.¹⁵⁸ We can begin with the mention in vv. 608-9, and 615-8, of the vrysoun and the circle of his helm. The first was embroidered with the best gems, and the circle had a device of diamonds. But, concerning the rest of his armour, there is nothing to show that his trust was placed in amulets of precious stones. Steel was the material that covered him. There is, however, mention of gold. In l. 569 we have the "gyld gere." His "polaynes" are "Aboute his kneȝ knaged wyth knoteȝ of golde" (576-7). He has gold "sporeȝ" (587).

"... his harnays watȝ ryche

ȝe lest lachet ouȝer loue lemed of golde." (590-1)

When the description of his horse Gryngolet is given, the same note is struck. In this case there is no record of precious stones; but, on the other hand, special stress seems to be laid on the use of gold. The "sadel" "gleded ful gayly with mony golde frenges," (598)

"The "brydel" was

... barred a-boute, with bryȝt golde bounden;" (600)

In fact

"al watȝ rayled on red ryche golde nayleȝ

ȝat al glytered & glent as glem of ȝe sunne." (603-4)

¹⁵⁸ R. Morris, *op. cit.*, (E.E.T.S., O.S. 4; 1864).

Then there was the shield with the pentangle on it :—

“ þer-fore on his schene schelde schapen wat3 þe knot,
þus alle wyth red golde vpon rede gowlez.” (662-3)

Thus equipped Gawayne rode out on his journey to the north. When after many adventures he reached the castle of the Green Knight, however travel-stained he may have been after his long journey, his apparel was none the less rich, and the reception he met with was in keeping with his rich raiment, for he was given a chamber where gold was used in the decoration.

Now it is clear that in these descriptions no special stress is laid upon precious stones, but we notice that the properties ascribed elsewhere to precious stones are here attributed to gold. We need not imagine that gems were not used in those parts of his armour where they are not mentioned. In fact, we read that, when Gawayne left the Green Knight's castle, he put on :—

“ His cote, wyth þe conysaunce of þe clere werkez,
Ennurned vpon veluet vertuuus stone3.” (2026-7)

although, in the earlier description of his gear, no mention is made of stones in connection with his “ cote.”

But, before his departure, the story tells of the two offers of the lady. She offers Gawayne first a ring :—

“ Ho ragt him a riche rynk of red golde werkez,
Wyth a starande ston, stondande alofte,
þat bere blusschande beme3 as þe bryzt sunne ;
Wyt 3e wel, hit wat3 worth wele ful hoge.” (1817-20)

This Gawayne refused, but was tempted by the offer of the lady's girdle. Though he refused it at first, he ended by taking it ; and it is explained that, when he put it on, on starting from the castle, he wore it, not for the richness of the girdle itself, but to “ sauen hym-self ” because he had been told that any man wearing this green “ lace ” could not be slain. As precious stones are not mentioned

as forming part of the girdle, we are led to adopt one of three conclusions : either—

- a*, gold, which is mentioned as part of the belt (1832, 2039), may be considered as potent an amulet as the stones themselves would be ;
- b*, there were stones on it, though they are not mentioned ;
- c*, the epithet “ vertuous ” (2027) is merely conventional, and Gawayne would rather trust to a magic belt than to the “ vertu ” of precious stones or gold.

In support of *a*, it would seem from the passage quoted from *Morte Arthure* in the section *Stones and Buildings*, that, in the fifteenth century, the same properties for the discovery of poison were attributed to gold as to precious stones. The consideration that the girdle, being of a green hue, might possibly be of faëry origin, strengthens *c*, and the soundest conclusion is probably that it does not matter very much whether gold or precious stones are employed in the preparation of such a belt as we read of in the poem : the essential thing is the fairy origin or the magic employed in the manufacture, and that only so far as stones or gold lend themselves to, or are appropriate carriers of, magic “ vertu ” are they of importance. The foundation of magic is the essential condition,—stones, gold, and other things form the superstructure.

Now it is not easy to see in instances of the use of precious stones the same motive as underlies the burial with the body of the dead of jewels as objects of value for the use of the departed in another world. In that case, should we not more often read of the inclusion of other objects of value and of utility ? Nor do they appear to have as their object the function of giving light to the dead. References to the glistening of the stones there are, indeed, and rubies are mentioned by Chaucer in the *Legend*. (Rubies, as we have seen, are specially referred to as giving light by night.) Can the idea that underlies the

practice be that of making the place of burial evident by night as well as by day, so that passers-by might avoid pollution from unexpected contact ?

Even if we add the mention of rubies, we have only four instances of the use of stones specially noted for their shining, and this number, out of over a dozen passages, does not seem large enough to base upon it any argument about the mention of light : though, again, in this case we may call attention to the fact that there is nothing in the quotations incompatible with the idea of their being used as light-givers.

Before leaving the question of the use of stones in individual life, we can turn to the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*. In them, we shall find very many references.

To begin with childbirth, there are several stones which facilitate the process. Such are Achates,¹⁵⁹ Alectorias,¹⁶⁰ Chelidonium,¹⁶¹ Lyncurium,¹⁶² Jaspis,¹⁶³ Hephaestitis,¹⁶⁴ to name some of those referred to, while Oritis¹⁶⁵ hinders.

To proceed,—in childhood, health is aided by Aetites¹⁶⁶ and Galactites.¹⁶⁷

We have already seen how many play a part in maintaining or restoring general health. In married life Chalcedonium¹⁶⁸ preserves goodwill between man and wife.

They are useful again for giving success in lawsuits and other affairs of daily life, such as the relations with one's lord. They are used, too, on special occasions, as for travel. They are valuable in such matters as ordeals and divination, the protection of houses and crops, and for miscellaneous purposes,—aiding thieves, breaking the bonds of prisoners, giving life, causing death, or pre-

¹⁵⁹ *Op. cit.*, F.R., viii., 11-2.

¹⁶⁰ *Ib.*, F.F.V., 144.

¹⁶¹ *Ib.*, A.L., 519-24.

¹⁶² *Ib.*, A.L., 1335-6.

¹⁶³ *Ib.*, S.P., iv., 6-7.

¹⁶⁴ *Ib.*, A.L., 897-900.

¹⁶⁵ *Ib.*, F.F.V., 633-4.

¹⁶⁶ *Ib.*, F.F.V., 561.

¹⁶⁷ *Ib.*, A.L., 1093-6.

¹⁶⁸ *Ib.*, A.P., 68-9.

serving from death. We are told that Diadochos¹⁶⁹ is a holy stone and "hates" death. If, however, this stone is applied to a dead body, the dead man will rise, without being able to walk, see, or speak.

So we see that, on almost every occasion in the life of the ordinary individual, precious stones have their uses and their special purposes.

With all these varied objects for the use of gems, it is curious that reference to their use in tombs or for any purpose connected with burial is wanting in the *Lapidaries*, which say nothing upon this subject.

If we seek for the explanation of the difference between the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* and the poetry, we find that, in some of the cases where there is silence in the poetry of the fourteenth century there is an obvious reason for the omission. Childbirth is very seldom referred to, and so we should not expect to find reference to gems in the course of our search dealing with this subject. Nor do such matters as lawsuits, children's health, the protection of house or crops, or the relations of tenant to landlord often find a place in the poetry. Further, many of the incidents which form part of the poetical story do not introduce the use of precious stones. A man may travel, for instance, and be in the habit of carrying a precious stone in his ring with him, or in his purse, but, unless this stone plays a prominent part in the story, it may not be mentioned in the verse. The very frequency of a custom may be a reason for omitting any mention of it, unless it supplies one of the essential details of the story.

P. J. HEATHER.

¹⁶⁹ *Ib.*, F.P., xliii., 3-4; A.L., 705-14.

(*To be continued.*)



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Precious Stones in the Middle-English Verse of the Fourteenth Century, II. (Continued)

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PRECIOUS STONES IN THE MIDDLE-ENGLISH VERSE OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY, II.

BY P. J. HEATHER, PH.D.

(Continued from p. 264.)

We may sum up what we have found in the section *Stones and the Individual* by saying that custom plays a large part in the use of stones by the individual. If we take account of the whole range of quotations on the subject we can see that, in very many of his acts, a man makes use of precious stones to such an extent that custom is implied. If we limit our survey to the Middle-English verse of the fourteenth century, only one custom is frequently referred to, that of adorning tombs with gems, or using them in other ways in connection with death or burial. Custom in such a matter almost certainly presupposes belief, but we find no clear indications in the verse as to what this belief may be. The custom is plain, but we must keep our minds open to find out the belief.

Stones and Buildings.

In Middle-English poetry there are many descriptions of buildings of different kinds. Palaces, Temples, Castles, The City of Mantrible, the City in the Apocalypse, the Gates of Paradise, are all described, and in some of the

passages details of images or shrines, or other parts of the furniture or decorations of these buildings, are also set out. Precious stones were freely used in the building, but very little help is afforded to any one who would enquire into the meaning and the object of such costly material being used.

It is quite possible, indeed, that the writers themselves would have been unable to give the real explanation, had they been asked. They might have replied that it had always been the custom, in writing of castles and palaces, to make a point of the richness of the construction and its ornamentation, and that therefore precious stones, marble, coral and such substances, had from time immemorial been mentioned in the story. In such cases, the reason which led to the first employment of jewels would naturally have been forgotten. It would not, indeed, suggest itself to most writers of the fourteenth century to investigate for themselves the reason and origin of such matters.

We shall have, therefore, to look closely at the passages which refer to the use of precious stones in connection with buildings, in order to find out for ourselves any suggestions implicitly contained.

Chaucer, in the *Parlement of Foules*, and again in the *Hous of Fame*, refers to temples :—

And upon pilers grete of jasper longe
I saw a temple of bras y-founded stronge.¹⁷⁰

and—

“ But as I sleep, me mette I was
Within a temple y-mad of glas ;
In whiche ther were mo images
Of gold, stondinge in sondry stages,
And mo riche tabernacles,
And with perree mo pinacles,
And mo curious portreytures,
And queynte maner of figures
Of olde werke, then I saw ever.”¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Chaucer, *Parlement of Foules*, 230-1. ¹⁷¹ *Hous of Fame*, 119-27.

In neither case, unfortunately, does he give us a hint of the object of the stones.

The furniture of temples also provides occasion for the mention of precious stones. We read in *Cleanness* of the vessels taken from the Temple of Jerusalem, and how they were set in Belshazzar's Hall :—

“ For alle þe blomes of þe bozes were blyknande perles
 & alle þe fruyt in þe formes of flaum-beande gemmes,
 And safyres, & sardiners, & semely topace,
 Alabaunderrynges, & amaraunz & amaffised stones,
 Casydoynes, & crysolytes, & clere rubies,
 Penitotes, & pynkardines, ay perles bitwene,
 So trayled & tryfled a traverce wer alle,
 Bi vche bekyrande þe bolde, þe brurdes al vmbe ; ” ¹⁷²

Images are not necessarily connected with temples, and in the following two passages from *Ferumbras* they form part of the furniture of a castle :—

“ Þe mametes þat þei sezen þare · bi-fore hure aldre sizt,
 Euerchone y-maked ware · of gold þat schon ful brizt,
 y-poured wiþ stones precieuse · þat wern þer-on i-pizt.” ¹⁷³
 “ & to þe mamettes þay buþ a-gon, of golde y-maked and
 ryche ston,
 þat was brizt & cler ; ” ¹⁷⁴

Mention of images is also made by Gower in his fifth book of the *Confessio Amantis* :—

“ Let make of gold and Stones fine
 A precious ymage riche.” ¹⁷⁵

and by the author of the poem on *Mary's Miracles* in *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*—

“ Þer is an ymage of hire iliche,
 A-Rayed wel wiþ luweles Riche.” ¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² R. Morris, *Early English Alliterative Poems*, 1467-74.

¹⁷³ S. J. Herrtage, *Sir Ferumbras*, (E.E.T.S., Extra S. xxxiv. ; 1879),

2541-3.

¹⁷⁴ *Ib.*, 5105-6.

¹⁷⁵ *Op. cit.*, 1548-9.

¹⁷⁶ *Op. cit.*, *Mary's Miracles*, 6, 43-4.

Censers were set with stones :—

“ And oper two after hem with sencers soone,
Set wiþ riche stones, and a viole of sence,” ¹⁷⁷

the brass cross of the Pardoner, too, was similarly ornamented :—

“ He hadde a croys of latoun, ful of stones,
And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.” ¹⁷⁸

and relics were enclosed in crystal :—

“ Than shewe I forth my longe cristal stones,
Y-crammed ful of cloutes and of bones ; ” ¹⁷⁹

“ Hit wes closed feir ant wel
In a cristal everuch del ; ” ¹⁸⁰

where the reference in the second passage is to the relic sent by the King of France.

But in all these passages, the only clue we can gather as to the reason why stones were used, is to be found in the two quotations from *Ferumbras*. In the one, we read that the gold shone full bright, and in the second we read of rich stone, that was bright and clear. Have we here, possibly, implied in the word “ bright,” either the true explanation or that which was thought in the fourteenth century to be true ? It may be so, but we can hardly bring ourselves to believe that, in practice, the precious stones, however they may have been used, were really found to give light, and we must see whether any other explanation will hold good.

For this purpose, we may well consider the evidence to be derived from the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, and compare it with what we have collected already. We have seen that

¹⁷⁷ W. W. Skeat, *Joseph of Arimathie*, (E.E.T.S., O.S. 44 ; 1871), 289-90.

¹⁷⁸ Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, *Prologue*, 699-700.

¹⁷⁹ *Ib.*, *Pardoner's Prologue*, 347-8. ¹⁸⁰ J Ritson, *op. cit.*, 637-8.

in Middle-English verse, the gems were built into the walls and pillars of the buildings and form an integral part of the construction. This is in contrast with the material of the *Lapidaries*, which tells of many instances of the use of stones but not for constructional purposes. We can read there how thieves make use of magnes in a house: they make small fires of coals and put powdered magnes upon the burning coal, the inmates flee in terror, and the thieves take whatever they want. The stones are used in the house, but for fumigating purposes, and not in the building.

There is another contrast which should be recorded. In the English references there is very little explanation, as we have seen, of the belief owing to which the stones are placed in the buildings. The *Lapidaries*, on the other hand, place on record the beliefs which explain the use of the gems. Thus, to prevent devils from dwelling in a house, use a sapphire. For protection of a house against lightning or tempest, corallium, lychnites, or emerald will serve. Against enchantments, sardius can be employed. No mishaps will befall the house where lyncurium is. Precious stones, truly, are explained as being of great practical utility.

For the construction of palaces, it would seem probable that references to precious stones would be numerous. There are, however, not many such references in Middle-English verse of the fourteenth century. One interesting passage tells of a palace in *faiërie* :—

“ þe walles were of cristal,
 þe heling was of fin ruwal
 þat schon swiþe brizte.

 þe resins wer of fin coral,
 To-gedre iuned wiþ metal
 Wiþ-inne and ek wiþ-oute.
 On þe front stod a charbokel ston :
 Ouere al þe contre it schon,
 Wiþ-outen eni doute.

Postes and laces þat þer were
 Of iaspe gentil þat was dere
 Al of one soute.
 Þe paleis was beloken al
 Aboute wiþ a marbel wal
 Of noble entaile.
 Vpon eueriche kernal
 Was ful of speres & of springal
 And stoutliche enbataile." ¹⁸¹

and beside this may be placed two which deal with the Throne of Fame and the jewellery which this goddess wore,—

" But al on hye, above a dees,
 Sitte in a see imperial
 That maad was of a rubee al,
 Which that a carbuncle is y-called,
 I saugh, perpetually y-stalled,
 A feminyne creature." ¹⁸²

and—

" But, lord ! the perrie and the richesse
 I saugh sitting on this goddesse ! " ¹⁸³

These last two quotations are preceded in Chaucer's description of the 'Hous of Fame' by the mention of a Castle, and its walls :—

" Al was of stone of beryle,
 Bothe castel and the tour," ¹⁸⁴
 " And eft y-mused longe whyle
 Upon these walles of beryle,
 That shoon ful lighter than a glas,
 And made wel more than hit was
 To semen, every thing, y-wis,
 As kinde thing of fames is ; " ¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ Zupitza, *op. cit.* ; Reinbrun, *Gijsonne of Warwike*, 79, l. 10-2 : 80, l. 1-4 : 81, l. 6.

¹⁸² Chaucer, *Hous of Fame*, Bk. iii., 1360-5.

¹⁸³ *Ib.*, 1393-4.

¹⁸⁴ *Ib.*, 1184-5.

¹⁸⁵ *Ib.*, 1287-92.

and of the walls :—

“ And they wer set as thikke of nouchis
Fulle of the fynest stones faire,
That men rede in the Lapidaire,
As greses growen in a mede ;
But hit were al to longe to rede
The names ; and therfore I pace.” ¹⁸⁶

The rooms in castles must often have been quite unadorned and even rough in their fittings. In other cases, they were richly ornamented ; and one such room, Florippe’s Chamber, is described in *Ferumbras* :—

“ Þe walles of þe chambre were · araid for þe nones,
Y-maked of ful riche gere · of coral & riche stones,
Þe wyndowes wern y-mad of iaspre · & of oþre stones
fyne,
Ypoudred wyþ perree of polastre · þe leues were
masalyne,
Al þe coples cipres were · & þe raftres wer al-so.” ¹⁸⁷

We have seen that the exterior of a castle can be decorated with precious stones of many kinds ; in one passage in *Florice and Blaunche flour* the wall of an orchard is said to have as its worst stone a cristal :—

“ Aboute the orchard goth a walle
The werste ston is cristal
Ther man mai sen on the ston
Mochel of this werldes wisdom.” ¹⁸⁸

A description of a castle in *faiërie* from *Sir Orpheo* can be given as a parallel to that of the fairy Palace already quoted :—

“ Amyd the launde a castel he sye,
Noble and ryche, ryght wonder hie,
And al the overyst walle
Schene as doth the crystal ;

¹⁸⁶ *Ib.*, 1350-5.

¹⁸⁷ *Op. cit.*, 1324-8.

¹⁸⁸ D. Laing, *A Penni Worth of Witte*, 286-9.

Fayr tours ther wer aboute,
 Gayly set with perles stoute ;
 The utmost that stode on the dyche
 Was of golde and selver ryche ;
 The fronte that was amynd all
 Was of dyvers metalle ;
 Within were wyde wonys,
 Of golde, selver and precious stones,
 Feyr pilers theron wer dyght
 Of precious stones and safyres bryght.
 Hit schone so fayr by nyght
 That al the towne therof was lyght.
 The ryche stones schone so cun,
 Al so bryght as ony sun.
 No man myght telle, ne thinke in thought,
 The ryches that therin was wrought." ¹⁸⁹

There still remain a few passages of diverse character to be mentioned. Three of them relate not indeed to gems, but to a precious stone, marble, of which the city of Mantrible, as described in *Ferumbras*, was built,—

"A þes half Mantrible þe grete Citee,
 ys þe brigge y-set,
 Al of marbre y-mad ys sche, wyþ a
 quynte iet." ¹⁹⁰

"Mantrible þe Citee ys y-called, wyþ
 marbre fyn ys he walled,
 & abatayld with toures hye." ¹⁹¹

"And þe walles were of Marbreston, wyþ
 pykes of yre y-set þer-on,
 oppon þe crest ful þykke." ¹⁹²

Another describes a town seen in Josaphat's vision in *Barlaam and Josaphat* ;

"Sepþe he lad hym forþ : as in to a toun ;

Alle þe walls were of gold : & of ryche stone ;" ¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ J. Ritson, *op. cit.*, 341-60. ¹⁹⁰ *Op. cit.*, 1680-1. ¹⁹¹ *Ib.*, 4309-10.

¹⁹² *Ib.*, 4647-8.

¹⁹³ *Op. cit.*, 1127, 1129.

and with this may be placed one from the *Vernon MS.*—

“ Heil þou kynges feir Cite,

Wip riche stones wonderly

Of vertues þou art by-set : ” ¹⁹⁴

Two other passages tell, one of the city in the Apocalypse, and the other of the gate of Paradise :—

“ Þe borȝ watȝ al of brende golde bryȝt,
 As glemande glas burnist broun,
 With gentyl gemmeȝ an-vnder pyȝt ;
 With bantelez twelue on basyng boun,
 Þe foundementȝ twelue of riche tenoun ;
 Vch tabelment watȝ a serlypeȝ ston,
 As derely deuyselȝ þis ilk toun,
 In apocalyppeȝ þe apostel Iohan.
 As þise stoneȝ in writ con nemme
 I knew þe name after his tale ;
 Iasper hyȝt þe fyrst gemme,
 Þat I on þe fyrst basse con wale,
 He glente grene in þe lowest hemme.
 Saffer helde þe secounde stale,
 Þe calsydoyne þenne withouten wemme,
 In þe þryd table con purly pale ;
 Þe emerade þe furþe so grene of scale ;
 Þe sardonysse þe fyfþe ston ;
 Þe sexte þe rybe he con hit wale,
 In þe apocalyppe þe apostel Iohan.
 Þet Ioyned Iohan þe crysolyt,
 Þe sevenþe gemme in fundament ;
 Þe aȝtþe þe beryl cler & quyt ;
 Þe topasye twynne how þe nente endent ;
 Þe crysopase þe tenþe is tyȝt ;
 Þe lacyngȝ þe enleuenþe gent ;
 Þe twelfþe þe gentyleste in vch a plyt,
 Þe amatyst purple with ynde blente ;

¹⁹⁴ *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS.*, (p. 115) ; *Another Hail Mary*, 233, 237-8.

Þe wal abof þe bantels bent,
 Masporye as glas þat glysnande schon,
 I knew hit by his deuysement,
 In þe apocalyppez (of) the apostel Iohan,
 As Iohan deuysed ȝet saȝ I þare.
 Þise twelue degres wern brode & stayre,
 Þe cyte stod abof ful sware,
 As longe as brode as hyȝe ful fayre ;
 Þe stretez of golde as glasse al bare,
 Þe wal of Iasper þat glent as glayre ;
 Þe wonez with-inne enurned ware
 Wyth alle kynnez perre þat moȝt repayre." 195

"Tre no stel nas ther on non
 Bot rede gold and precious ston
 And al God made of nought,
 Jaspers topes and cristal
 Margarites and coral
 And riche safer stones
 Ribes and salidoines
 Onicles and causteloinies
 And diamaunce for the nones
 In tabernacles thai wer y-wrought
 Richer might it be nought
 With pilers gent and smal
 Arches y-bent with charbukel ston
 Knottes of rede gold ther opon
 And pinacles of cristal." 196

While the last of this group is from Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* and relates how Cleopatra had a shrine made with precious stones, to receive the embalmed body of Antony :—

"But made hir subtil werkmen make a shryne
 Of alle the rubies and the stones fyne
 In al Egipte that she coude espye ;" 197

195 R. Morris, *Early English Alliterative Poems*, *Pearl* 988-1027.

196 Laing and Turnbull, *Owain Miles*, pp. 37, 8 ; 16, 30.

197 *Op. cit.*, 672-4.

It is a point of some interest to note from what different sources the quotations we have just been considering have been derived. Many of the examples have been taken from the Romances of our period ; ecclesiastical writings supply us with others ; one is from a *Chronicle* ; an elegy furnishes another ; and several are culled from miscellaneous sources. But with all this breadth of allusion we are still left with very little to guide us in our search for the reason why stones were actually used in so many cases spread over so wide a field.

The stones are frequently mentioned, but we are still at a loss as to the object of their use, and it will not help, as we have seen, to refer to the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* in which the references to precious stones are made from a different standpoint. At a later date, in the fifteenth century, there are several quotations from the *Destruction of Troy* which give good descriptions of temples and palaces :—

Helen went to the temple of Venus at Cythera :

“ In hir atire to þe tempull tomly ho yode,
Þere onestly ho offert, honourt hir goddes
with giftes of golde & of gode stones ;
Tariet in the tempull, tentit to goumes ; ” ¹⁹⁸

Paris, coming in with his companions, addresses them :—

“ Here is a tempull atyret all with triet godys,
And the grettist of Grise gedrit þerin,
· · · · ·
ffor the tempull is atyret all with tryet clothes,
Bassons of bright gold, & oþer brode vessell,
Chaundelers full chefe, & charbokill stones,
And other Riches full Rife þat we may rad haue ; ” ¹⁹⁹

There is no indication of the use that would be made in the ordinary way of such gifts. They might be added as ornaments to the fabric of the Temple, or the value, if they

¹⁹⁸ *Op. cit.*, 3000-3.

¹⁹⁹ *Ib.*, 3157-8, 3168-71.

were sold, could be used for the benefit of the building or of its services.—There is a long description of Priam's palace :—

“Priam by purpos a pales gert make

.

Withoute, toures full tore torret aboue,
 Þat were of heght so hoge, as I here fynde,
 Þat the clowdes hom cledde in vnclene ayre.

.

To all the prouyns þai apperit & pertis ofer,
 With mekyll solas to se in mony syde londis :
 Of crafty colours to know, all in course set,
 Made all of marbyll with mason deuysse,
 With ymagry full honest openly wroght.

In cornols by course clustret o lofte.

The windowes, worthely wroght in a mesure,
 Shapyn full shene all of shyre stones,
 Caruen in Cristall by crafte of Entaile,
 Pight into pilers prudly to shewe

The bases & bourdurs all of bright perle.

Within this palis of prise was a proude halle,
 Þat large was of lenght & louely to shewe,
 Painted full prudly with pure gold ouer,
 Drapred by dene with a dese riall.

There were bordis full bright aboute in þat sale,
 Set in a sercle, of Sedur tre fyn,

Gret vp fro þe ground vppon gray marbill.

With a flore þat was fret all of fyne stones,

Pauyt prudly all with proude colours,

Made after musycke, men on to loke.

In the cheffe of þe chose hall, chosen for þe kyng,

Was a grounde vp graid with gresis of Marbill,

And a tabill atyret, all of triet yuer,

Bourdurt about all with bright Aumbur,

Þat smelt is & Smethe, smellis full swete,

With taste for to touche the tabull aboute,

ffor the soverayn him selfe was a sete rioll,

Pight full of perrieris & of proude gemys,
 Atyret with a tabernacle of Eyntayill fyn.
 At the tother hede of þe halle was, hegh vppolofte,
 A wonderfull werke weghe to beholde ;
 With preciose stones of price & perles ynogh,
 An auter enournet in nome of a god,
 Goond vp by a grese all of goode stones,
 Twenty pase vp pight all of pure cristall,
 Þat were shynyng full shene shalkes to deuyse.
 Vne oppon þe Auter was amyt to stond
 An ymage full noble in þe nome of god,—
 ffyftene cubettes by course all of clene lenght,
 Shynyng of shene gold & of shap nobill,
 Dubbed ouer with dyamondes, þat were dere holdyn,
 Þat with lemys of light as a lamp shone : ” ²⁰⁰

While later in the story another description occurs :—

“ Hit was pight vp with pilers all of pure stones,
 Palit full prudly ; and a proude flore
 Rowchet all with cristall, clere as the sonne.
 The walles vp wroght on a wise faire
 With stones full stoute, stithest of vertue.
 ffaire pillers were þere proude, all of pure coper,
 In ffoure hyernes of the house hogely fest.
 O lofte on the louely were loget to stond,
 ffoure ymages full fresshe, all of fyn gold,
 Wonderfully wroght weghis to be-hold,
 With gematry Justly aioynet to gedur ;
 Miche soteltie, for-sothe, setting of notes,
 Crafte þat was coynt, knawynge of tymes,
 And other faynet fare & fantasy olde ! ” ²⁰¹

But a very interesting passage occurs in the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, which deals, not indeed with a building, but with the service of sixty cups for the king :—

“ Sexty cowpes of suyte fore the kyng seluynne,
 Crafty and curious, coruene fulle faire,

²⁰⁰ *Op. cit.*, 1629, 1637-9, 1642-84.

²⁰¹ Panton and Donaldson, *op. cit.*, 8384-97.

In euer-ilk a party pyghte with precyous stones,
 That nane enpoysone sulde goo preuely ther-vndyre,
 Bot the bryght golde for brethe sulde briste al to peces,
 Or ells the venyme sulde voyde thurghe vertue of the
 stones." ²⁰²

Here the properties of an amulet are expressly attributed to the cups, and it is of interest to notice that both the gold and the stones are mentioned as being of power to resist the ill effects of poison. A king or wealthy noble might thus be in safety, and the possession of such a set among the drinking vessels of the palace would be of very practical advantage to the rich or powerful man. The association of gold and precious stones as twin amulets recalls the same association already referred to in the story of *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*.

The *Destruction of Troy* also contains another passage recording the making of an image of Belus by his son Ninus, which Gower had already dealt with in the Fifth Book of his *Confessio Amantis*:—

"An ymage a noble anon gert he make,
 All grauyn of gold & of good stonys,
 Vne of mesure & mykyll, of his myld fader.
 ffull solemly set in the sight of the pepull,
 With worship on all wise, þat worthy comaundit
 To all the pepull of his prouyns, as a prise god." ²⁰³

But, before we leave this part of the subject, we should ask ourselves whether there is any 'vertu' in looking at precious stones. Is it possible that the practice of decorating with gems temples, palaces, and castles may be due to some special properties of the stones? We have seen in other connections how stones were believed to have healing qualities or amuletic power. In one instance, in the *Romaunt of the Rose*, we are told that the mordant of

²⁰² E. Brock, *op. cit.*, 210-5.

²⁰³ Panton and Donaldson, *op. cit.*, 4340-5.

Richesse' robe had such grace that he who might look upon it, fasting, was sure for a whole day not to be blind. May it not well have been owing to a similar belief that stones were used in buildings of all kinds? Anyone who lived in a palace, decorated with many kinds of stones, might well be thought immune from illness or danger if the stones were so chosen as to afford protection of different sorts.

We read in *St. Christopher in English Mediæval Wall-painting*, by H. C. Whaite, that—

"One of the treasures of the Rylands Library, the early colour print of St. Christopher dating from 1423, shows the typical rendering of the Saint, and also bears a Latin inscription :

*Cristofori faciem die quacunque tueris
Illa nempe die morte mala non morieris.*

From this it is obvious that the strong appeal made by the Saint to the popular mind was his reputed power of preserving his devotees from sickness or death."²⁰⁴

This suggestion is confirmed by a passage in Sir Thos. Browne's *Pseudodoxia* :—

"Add . . . the recorded story of Christopher, that before his Martyrdom he requested of God, that whereever his body were, the places should be freed from pestilence and mischiefs, from infection. And therefore his picture or pourtract was usually placed in publick wayes, and at the entrance of Towns and Churches, according to the received Distich.

Christophorum videas, postea tutus eris."²⁰⁵

Thus we have, on the one hand, a stone, of such grace that security against blindness is granted to the man who looks on it, fasting : on the other hand, a picture, which affords to the beholder safety or immunity from "evil death." The link that unites them is the possession of grace or 'vertu.' We may also compare the paint that gives light, referred to in the *Cursor Mundi*. If to the man

²⁰⁴ *Op. cit.*, (1929), p. 9.

²⁰⁵ *Op. cit.*, Bk. v., chap. xvi.

of the Middle Ages the regarding of stone or picture was thought to bring benefits of health, this may very possibly give us the reason why palaces and temples were adorned with precious stones. If such benefit could be gained by looking at the gems as was granted to those who looked at the pictures, a very potent reason for the decoration of buildings in this way is supplied.

Such passages as explain the properties of precious stones are of great value, because, in the particular cases which they describe, there is no doubt as to the prophylactic powers attributed to the stones ; but it may well be noted that in very many, if not most, of the other passages which are less explicit, there is nothing which contradicts the existence of these powers : and that many hints and suggestions show that the possession of amuletic 'vertu' was a commonplace with the people of fourteenth century : a poet might enlarge upon this occasionally, and, when it is not expressly attributed to the stones, it may be taken that the mere mention of 'vertu' or 'grace' or 'power' very frequently implies some or all of what is on rare occasions more fully described in the poems.

This consideration need not blind us to the fact that in many descriptions of palaces and other buildings there is a great deal that is merely of a conventional nature ; the long lists of stones, with the names arranged in verses that are easily remembered, form part of the poets' stock in trade. The fact, however, that qualities have become conventional only shows that the stage where those same qualities needed to be stated or enumerated had passed away ; it cannot be taken as a denial of the property attributed.

The custom of decorating buildings by introducing into their construction precious stones is well attested, and we have a clue as to the belief implied which may be useful to us in our further search.

Stones and Clothing.

In this section we shall find many passages in Middle-English Verse which speak of stones in connection with clothing. The evidence of the poetry is supported by that from other sources. Brasses, effigies, the illustrations of the MSS. of the period, all testify to the adornment of clothing with gems.

It is worthy of note that, whereas the wearing of precious stones is one of the most frequent subjects in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, the stones are not recorded as ornaments worn on the clothing. The wearer or the possessor is often mentioned, but the stone is more often carried in a ring,—occasionally in the hand, or suspended round the neck, or tied to the body. This implies that the important thing is the wearing ; display counts for very little.

The inference already suggested, that the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* are scientific treatises, is thus confirmed. There is little doubt that, if a professional jeweller were to write a book upon precious stones, he would lay special stress upon the ornamental use of the stones. From his point of view the book would be better if it helped him to sell a string of pearls for use in display, than if it set out the various properties of pearls, and left the purchaser content with the acquisition of a single stone. The fact that display is not made a feature of the book, indicates that the outlook of the writers is scientific. Consequently, the standpoint of the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* differs from that of the poets who wrote in the fourteenth century, and any confirmation as to customs and beliefs connected with precious stones derived from the *Lapidaries* will be scientific rather than general.

It may be taken that the use of rings with precious stones in them, and of crowns, mitres, and gloves ornamented by jewels, had at first a special significance. The use and possession of such insignia formed a mark of

distinction, and only the higher dignitaries of Church and State, we read, were entitled to wear them. In *King Athelstone*, the mitre and the ring were not regarded as personal possessions of the archbishop, but as the special insignia of his office, and they had to be returned when he was deposed.²⁰⁶ In *Cursor Mundi*, too, we read of King Solomon:—

“ His riche croun o gold an(d) stan
Did first be of his heued tan,”²⁰⁷

This agrees with what is recorded of our kings in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. F. W. Fairholt mentions about Richard I that—

“ The regal gloves, with the large jewel on the back of the hand, should, however, be noticed as characteristic of dignity,”²⁰⁸

and speaks of the jewelled belt of King John.²⁰⁹

C. A. Stothard says of the same King:—

“ on his hand are jewelled gloves.”²¹⁰

Of the time of Henry II, Fairholt states that—

“ Gloves, jewelled at the back, became a characteristic distinction with the higher classes, both in church and state.”²¹¹

Under Edward I costume was still simple, and when his tomb was opened in 1774, in it were found—

“ A crimson satin mantle, fastened on the shoulder by a gilt fibula, decorated with precious stones; a stole of white tissue, ornamented with gilt quatrefoils, and knots of pearl, crossed the breast, and jewelled gloves decorated the hands. The lower part of the body was wrapped in a piece of cloth of gold, which was not disturbed.”²¹²

²⁰⁶ C. H. Hartshorne, *Ancient Metrical Tales*, (1829), pp. 20-3.

²⁰⁷ R. Morris, *Cursor Mundi*, 9097-8, (Cotton MS.).

²⁰⁸ F. W. Fairholt, *Costume in England*, (1846), p. 98. ²⁰⁹ *Ib.*, p. 101.

²¹⁰ C. A. Stothard, *The Monumental Effigies of Great Britain*, (1817), p. 16.

²¹¹ F. W. Fairholt, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

²¹² *Ib.*, pp. 106-7.

But as time went on the old restrictions began to lose force, and when we reach the fourteenth century they had so nearly ceased to be observed that sumptuary laws had to be passed in the reigns of the second and third Edwards. In 1363 it was enacted that esquires were not to wear any ornaments of precious stones.

So it is quite natural that many of the references to gems in the Middle-English poetry are specially to royal or imperial personages, or, in some cases, to gods.

Thus Chaucer, referring to Nero, wrote :—

“ Of rubies, saphires, and of perles whyte
Were all his clothes brouded up and down ;
For he in gemmes greetly gan delyte.” ²¹³

The funeral pyre, in Chaucer's *Knichtes Tale*, was prepared for Arcite, of blood royal :—

“ Ne how the fyr was couched first with stree,
And than with drye stokkes cloven a three,
And than with grene wode and spycerye,
And than with cloth of gold and with perrye,
And gerlandes hanging with ful many a flour.” ²¹⁴

The mantle of the image of Apollo :—

“ His mantell was of large entaile,
Beset with perrie al aboute.” ²¹⁵

Of Cenobia, “ of Palimerie quene,” Chaucer states—

“ Hir riche array ne mighte nat be told
As wel in vessel as in hir clothing ;
She was al clad in perree and in gold,”
.

“ Amonges othere thinges that he wan,
Hir char, that was with gold wrought and perree,”
.

“ Biforen his triumphe walketh she
With gilte cheynes on hir nekke hanging ;

²¹³ *Monkes Tale*, 3658-60.

²¹⁴ *Knichtes Tale*, 2933-7.

²¹⁵ Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, Bk. v., 7116-7 (S. text).

Corowned was she, as after hir degree,
And ful of perree charged hir clothing." ²¹⁶

In *William of Palerne*, too, rich clothing is recognised as appertaining to a king's son, when the child in the werewolf's den :—

"Ȝat so loueliche lay & wep · in ȝat loȝli caue,
cloȝed ful kemly · for ani kud kinges sone,
In gode cloȝes of gold · a-greȝed ful riche,
wiȝ perrey & pellure · pertelyche to ȝe riȝttes." ²¹⁷

In *St. Erkenwald*, the buried judge was thought by the onlookers to be a king, from the richness of his array :—

"Al with glisnande golde his gowne was hemmyd,
With mony a precious perle picchit ȝer-on," ²¹⁸

But other references are not limited to persons of high social standing. The passage in the *Prologue to the Wife of Bath's Tale* applies to no particular grade of society :—

"In habit, maad with chastitee and shame,
Ye wommen shul apparaille yow," quod he,
"And noght in tressed heer and gay perree,
As perles, ne with gold, ne clothes riche ;" ²¹⁹

A line in *Cursor Mundi*, too, is of general application :—

"Bath gold and stan for maiden scrude," ²²⁰

Ywayne and Gawayne were arrayed only as knights :—

"A girdel ful riche for the nanes,
Of perry and of preciows stanes." ²²¹

and—

"Wyth a lyȝt lyn vrysoun ouer ȝe auentayle,
Embrawdē & bounden wyth ȝe best gemmeȝ," ²²²

²¹⁶ *Monkes Tale*, 3493-5, 3549-50, 3553-6.

²¹⁷ W. W. Skeat, *The Romance of William of Palerne*, (E.E.T.S., Extra S. i., 1867), 50-3.

²¹⁸ I. Gollancz, *Select Early English Poems*, *St. Erkenwald*, (1922), 78-9.

²¹⁹ Chaucer, *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, 342-5.

²²⁰ R. Morris, *Cursor Mundi* (Cotton MS.), 3250.

²²¹ J. Ritson, *op. cit.*, 1105-6.

²²² R. Morris, *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*, 608-9.

While several references in *A Penni Worth of Witte* to the jewels bought by the merchant for his leman point to the same relaxation of custom :—

“ Gerlondes of gold 't perles bright

 And what juwels sche wold haue bought

 What juwels thou wilt haue bought

 He bought his leman of the best
 Noble juwels 't atire ” ²²³

In *Roberd of Cisyle*, both the gifts of clothing to the messengers and the clothing worn by the angel himself, acting in Robert's place, were adorned with stones :—

“ And al was couched mid perre :

 And al was couched mid perles riche,” ²²⁴

There are two special passages of which the keynote seems to be set out in a line of the *Parlement of the Thre Ages* :—

“ The pryce of thi perrye wolde purches the londres : ²²⁵

One is from that poem :—

“ He ne hade no hode ne no hatte bot his here one,
 A chaplet one his chefe-lere, chosen for the nones,
 Raylede alle with rede rose, richeste of floures,
 With trayfoyles and trewloues of full triede perles,
 With a chefe charebocle chosen in the myddes,
 He was gerede alle in grene, alle with golde by-weuede,
 Embroddirde alle with besantes and beralles full riche :
 His colere with calsydoynnes clustrede full thikke,
 With many dyamandes full dere dight one his sleues.

²²³ D. Laing, *op. cit.*, 19, 29, 38, 66-7.

²²⁴ C. Horstmann, *Sammlung Altenglischer Legenden*, (Heilbronn, 1878), 237, 253.

²²⁵ I. Gollancz, *Select Early English Poems, Parlement of the Thre Ages*, (1915), 192.

Þe semys with saphirs sett were full many,
 With emeraudes and amatistes appon iche syde,
 With full riche rubyes raylede by the hemmes ;
 Þe price of that perry were worthe powndes full many." ²²⁶

and the second from the *Romaunt of the Rose* :—

“ Richesse a robe of purple on hadde

 Aboute hir nekke of gentil entaile
 Was shet the riche chevesaile,
 In which ther was ful gret plentee
 Of stones clere and bright to see.
 Rychesse a girdel hadde upon
 The bokel of it was of a stoon
 Of vertu greet, and mochel of might ;
 For who-so bar the stoon so bright,
 Of venim thurte him no-thing doute,
 While he the stoon hadde him aboute.
 That stoon was greetly for to love,
 And til a riche mannes bihove
 Worth al the gold in Rome and Fryse.
 The mourdaunt, wrought in noble wyse,
 Was of a stoon ful precious,
 That was so fyn and vertuous,
 That hool a man it coude make
 Of palasye, and of tooth-ake.
 And yit the stoon hadde suche a grace,
 That he was siker in every place,
 Al thilke day, not blind to been,
 That fasting mighte that stoon seen.
 The barres were of gold ful fyne,
 Upon a tissu of satyne,
 Ful hevy, greet, and no-thing light,
 In everich was a besaunt-wight.
 Upon the tresses of Richesse
 Was set a cercle, for noblesse,
 Of brend gold, that ful lighte shoon ;

²²⁶ I. Gollancz, *Select Early English Poems, Parlement of the Thre Ages*, (1915), 117-29.

So fair, trowe I, was never noon.
 But he were cunning, for the nones,
 That coude devyysen alle the stones,
 That in that cercle shewen clere ;
 It is a wonder thing to here.
 For no man coude preyse or gesse
 Of hem the valewe or richesse.
 Rubyes there were, saphyres, jagounces ;
 And emeraudes, more than two ounces.
 But al bifore, ful sotilly,
 A fyn carboucle set saugh I,
 The stoon so cleer was and so bright,
 That, al-so sone as it was night,
 Men mighte seen to go, for nede,
 A myle or two, in lengthe and brede.
 Swich light (tho) sprang out of the stoon,
 That Richesse wonder brighte shoon,
 Bothe hir heed, and al hir face,
 And eke aboute hir al the place." ²²⁷

At a later time, *The Destruction of Troy*, in referring to the taking of booty, speaks of good stones in girdles, without specifying the particular qualities of the stones :—

" Geton girduls full gay, mony good stonys ; " ²²⁸

In the passage just quoted from the *Romaunt of the Rose* stress is laid on the richness of what is described, especially in lines 1093 and 1115-6. Of the chevesaile the author merely mentions the plenty of stones : of the bokel of the girdle of Richesse, which was a precious stone, he speaks of the ' vertu ' and ' might ' : the mordant he describes as being a stone, precious, fine, ' vertuous,' and possessing grace ; the circle of gold was studded with all kind of precious stones. In a word, the poet has set himself to describe such great display of wealth as should surpass all

²²⁷ *Romaunt of the Rose*, 1071, 1081-1128.

²²⁸ Panton and Donaldson, *op. cit.*, 1373.

that had been heard of. But this richness of ornament is in close connection with the properties of the stones ; and it is a good thing that we have such a list of these properties as we have in this passage.

First, the stone of the girdle's buckle, which is not named, protects against poison ; the mordant was of a stone whose properties were to heal a man of palsy and of toothache ; to look on it, fasting, was to be secured for the day against blindness ; the circle contained many stones, of which four sorts are named, though their properties are not given. In the front of this circle was a carbuncle, and the power of this stone, which was dealt with in the section *Stones and Nature*, is set out very fully. It is here made evident that the shining is no reflection of sunlight, as we have already seen, for it occurs at nightfall. The strength of the light is such that it gives light for a mile or two in all directions, and illumines not only Richesse' head and face, but all her surroundings.

This passage is the longest and most descriptive of jewelled clothes of any in the verse of the period ; but the shorter passage in *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, which describes the "gome alle in grene," is not without value. The author agrees with the other evidence in assessing at a high price the value of the stones ; but, though he gives the names of several, he, unfortunately for our purpose, does not give any reason why they were chosen for the places they occupy. His garland with pearls and a carbuncle, his green robe with beryls, his collar with chalcidones, the sleeves with diamonds, and their seams set with sapphires, emeralds, amethysts, and rubies, combine to give a picture of extravagance in dress difficult to parallel, except by that given above.

Individual details can be matched from other quotations ; from the mantle of Apollo, the gown of the Pagan Judge, the clothing of Cenobia, as well as from that of Nero ; and all these, together with the protest against perree on

women's clothes in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, tell the same tale of jewelled clothing.

The use of stones in connection with the funeral pyre and the arraying of bodies in rich robes for burial furnish occasions for display of precious stones, and illustrate the point that the use of gems in the decoration of clothing was quite ordinary.

In addition to clothing itself there are many ornaments to clothing, which are specially adapted for the display of precious stones. Brooches are an example, and there are some passages in Chaucer dealing with the custom of ornamenting these. There are the brooches and rings with gems prepared for Griselda :—

“ But natheles this markis hath don make
Of gemmes, set in gold and in asure,
Broches and ringes, for Grisildis sake.” ²²⁹

and the brooch of Thebes which we have already dealt with in the section *Stones and Magic*.

There is also in *Troilus and Criseyde* the brooch, with a heart-shaped ruby set in it, given by Criseyde to Troilus :—

“ And pleyinge entrechaungen hir ringes,
Of which I can nought tellen no scripture ;
But wel I woot a broche, gold and asure,
In whiche a ruby set was lyk an herte,
Criseyde him yaf, and stak it on his sherte.” ²³⁰

Bracelets, too, are ornaments often adorned with gems, and that of beads of coral worn by Chaucer's Prioress, may be quoted as another example :—

“ Of smal coral aboute hir arm she bar
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene ” ²³¹

while in one poem, the stanzaic *Le Morte Arthur*, there is a

²²⁹ *Clerkes Tale*, 253-5.

²³⁰ *Troilus and Criseyde*, iii., 1368-72.

²³¹ Prol. A. 158-9.

reference to the purse found by Gawayne on the body of the maid of Ascalot :—

“ And found a purs fulle Riche a-Righte,
With gold and perlis þat was I-bente : ” ²³²

One notable gap in the list of accessories of clothing, adorned with gems, is the absence of any reference to jewelled gloves, although we know, from other sources, that these, in some cases, had gems inset in them.

Such then are the references to jewelled clothing, and to some of the ornaments in Middle-English verse. But the spirit in which the stones were regarded is very important, and this is illustrated at length in the story of Adrian and Bardus, told by Gower in the fifth book of his *Confessio Amantis*, although in this story the stone is not used in clothing, but is sold for its value. The story runs as follows:—Adrian, hunting, fell into a pit, and cried all day for deliverance. Bardus, a poor man, passed by with his ass and heard Adrian's cry for help. He let down a cord and, with the aid of the ass, pulled up the cord again with an ape upon it. Bardus thought it was a jape of ‘ faïerie ’; but, in answer to the repeated calls of Adrian, he let down his cord again and pulled up a serpent. Bardus then thought that he was a victim of ‘ fantosme,’ but on Adrian's promise to share his goods with Bardus, half and half, the latter let down the cord for the third time and pulled up Adrian. Adrian refused to fulfil his promise of sharing his goods with Bardus, who went out as before with his ass to gather wood. The ape daily collected wood for him in gratitude, and one day the serpent met him and let fall from its mouth :—

“ A Ston mor briht than a cristall.” ²³³

Bardus took the stone home to his wife, then sold it, in town, to a jeweller, who paid him gold for it. Arrived

²³² J. D. Bruce, *Le Morte Arthur*, (E.E.T.S., Extra S. lxxxviii., 1903), 1034-5.

²³³ *Confessio Amantis*, Bk. v., 5066.

home, he took the gold from his purse and in it found, as well, the stone which he had left with the jeweller. He would take it to another place to-morrow :—

“ And if it wol noght with him duelle,
Bot crepe into mi purs ayein,
Than dar I sauffy swere and sein,
It is the vertu of the Ston.” ²³⁴

The stone did return to his purse time after time.

“ Such was the fortune and the grace.” ²³⁵

This story illustrates the attitude of mind of the people of the period when Gower told his tale. It was all a story, no doubt, and, moreover, one told by a poet. But the whole atmosphere of magic is there. The minds of the readers or hearers, like the mind of Bardus, are attuned to a belief in ‘*faïerie*,’ in ‘*fantosmes*,’ in the ‘*vertu*’ of the stone. The stone has magic properties, and, as the story was told, who could refuse to lend his belief? If one was inclined to doubt, was there not the stone ‘*creeping*’ into the purse as often as it was sold, and was not this enough to induce a willing belief?

There is no reason to doubt that this belief in the “*vertu of the stone*,” which is explicitly placed before us in the tale, existed also in the minds of many of Gower’s contemporaries. It is more difficult to decide whether the belief during this period should be considered as a survival of past superstition or as an active belief of the period. In all probability such beliefs varied, then as now, in vitality from individual to individual, and it would be as hard to attempt to measure public acceptance of them by the folk of the fourteenth century, as it is nowadays to gauge public opinion on any point that admits of discussion.

The doubt as to whether precious stones possess such ‘*vertus*’ as are described in the *Lapidaries* is no new thing, and is well set out in the First French version. The doubt is not admitted, for in the same passage the definite

²³⁴ *Ib.*, 5108-11.

²³⁵ *Ib.*, 5122.

statement is made that in many places and countries their 'vertus' are proved and that it is well seen and known that God made them and put in them great virtues.²³⁶ Thus we need not question that doubt and discussion existed upon all such subjects. Men's minds were exercised on such matters, as we see by the discussion in Chaucer's *Nonne Preestes Tale*, and elsewhere, on the meaning of dreams; and minds that are alert and in search of truth will certainly debate on all matters such as a belief in amulets, on which there exists no definite authority strong enough to stop all questioning.

There still remains another class of references to mention, consisting of those treating of the equipment of horses. From what we know of the care and affection for horses, illustrated in some of the stories of our period, it need not surprise us to find that the saddles and bridles of horses were often enriched with stones. The fortune of the rider was bound up with that of his steed, and it was natural that the horse's harness should be in keeping with that of the knight he carried.

Thus, in *Ferumbras*, Clarioun's harness is described:—

"Þe sadel þat þo was him oppon With
gold was fret & pretious ston,
& þe harneys was of golde." ²³⁷

In the stanzaic *Le Morte Arthur*, when Lancelot brings the queen back with many knights, we read:—

"And in there kyrtelles Ryde Allone,
And Iche knyght a grene garlande,
Sadillis sette with Ryche stone," ²³⁸

When the King of France sent a present to the King of England, the *Chronicle* records:—

"The bridles were for the nones
Bygo with precieuse stones;" ²³⁹

²³⁶ *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, F.F.V., 939-66.

²³⁷ S. J. Herrtage, *op. cit.*, 3663-4. ²³⁸ J. D. Bruce, *op. cit.*, 2366-8.

²³⁹ J. Ritson, *op. cit.*, *Chronicle of England*, 623-4.

In *Florice and Blaunche flour*, too, we have :—

“ The arsouns wer gold pur and fin
Stones of vertu set ther in
Bigon abouten with orfreis,” ²⁴⁰

These passages testify to the practice of insetting stones in the harness of horses, and in the last one quoted special mention is made of the vertu of the stones. Besides these, there are two which call for separate mention, because in both cases the atmosphere of ‘ faërie ’ seems to be present. In the tale of Rosiphelee, Gower records that pearls and precious stones were used in both the saddles and the bridles seen by Rosiphelee in the route of ladies. He tells of the ladies :—

“ The beaute faye upon her face
Non erthly thing it may desface ; ” ²⁴¹

Of those that had been servants to love, we read :—

“ The Sadles were of such a Pride
With Perle and gold so wel begon,
So riche syh sche nevere non ; ” ²⁴²

But there was one rider, who had been a king's daughter, that followed, ill-arrayed and carrying halters for the others, as a punishment because she—

“ liste noght to love obeie.”

At the end of her life, however, she turned to offer service to love, but died before being wedded to the knight of her choice. For her turning to love, she was allowed to wear a riche bridle,—

“ And natheles ther was with that
A riche bridel for the nones
Of gold and precieuse Stones.” ²⁴³

These things she explained to Rosiphelee ; and suddenly the route of the month of May passed out of sight.

The second of the two passages relates how the Green

²⁴⁰ D. Laing, *A Penni Worth of Witte*, 3-5.

²⁴¹ *Confessio Amantis*, Bk. iv., 1321-2.

²⁴² *Ib.*, 1312-4.

²⁴³ *Ib.*, 1352-4.

Knight rode into Arthur's hall. The mane of his horse had gold thread plaited in ; the tail and the mane twined in one pattern, dressed with rich stones, all along the tail, then bound with a thong with a tight knot aloft, where many bright bells of burnished gold rang.

“Þe mane of þat mayn hors much to hit lyke,
 Wel cresped & cemmed wyth knottes ful mony,
 Folden in wyth fildore aboute þe fayre grene,
 Ay a herle of þe here, an oþer of golde ;
 Þe tayl & his toppyng twynnen of a sute
 & bounden boþe wyth a bande of a bryȝt grene,
 Dubbed wyth ful dere stoneȝ, as þe dok lasted,
 Syþen þrawen wyth a þwong a þwarle knot alofte,
 Þer mony belleȝ ful bryȝt of brende golde rungen.”²⁴⁴

Although, unfortunately for us, full details are not always given, there is no doubt that the virtues of the precious stones play a very important part in all these cases. Sometimes, indeed, the qualities and properties possessed by the jewels are enumerated ; in others, some conventional epithet is applied ; and, even when nothing is expressly stated as to why they were chosen for the ornamentation of the clothing or equipment, it is fair to assume that they would not have been so chosen merely for their commercial value, or perhaps that their commercial value depends in a large degree upon the virtues they possess. The two statements were not very widely different in meaning, in the fourteenth century.

The suggestion, put forward in a tentative spirit, at the end of the last section, has received notable confirmation in this section. Not only is the custom of wearing rich clothing affirmed, and the practice of adorning such apparel with precious stones frequently referred to, but we have been fortunate enough to find some special assertions that the stones possessed ‘*vertus*’ which are in some cases enumerated for us, so that the belief in the

²⁴⁴ R. Morris, *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*, 187-95.

amuletic properties of gems is seen clearly to be the base of the custom of wearing them. This custom is, it is true, spoken of as an individual taste in some instances, particularly in that of Nero, who delighted in gems ; but the definite statement that looking upon the stone protected him who looked does a great deal to strengthen the feeling that our clue is a good one.

Stones, Crowns, and Rings.

There are two ornaments used as insignia, which may possess a symbolic significance and are frequently mentioned as being adorned with precious stones. They are crowns and rings, and the references to them are worthy of consideration in a special section. These two ornaments provide an illustration of the fact noted above that the prevalence and width of appeal of customs vary very greatly. For, while the custom of wearing crowns or having the right to wear a crown or coronet has remained limited to kings and to nobles, the custom of wearing rings has become general, the old symbolic significance attached to the ring of office having been lost in many cases.

From very early times it has been a custom for kings to wear crowns ; the visitor to the Musée de Cluny at Paris can still see the crowns of the Gothic kings, richly studded with gems. Their connection with jewels was quite usual, as we learn from Chaucer :—

“ Me thoghte the felawship as naked
Withouten hir, that saw I ones,
As a coroune withoute stones.” ²⁴⁵

In the same way, the use of rings, as part of the insignia of bishops, was very early. In *Arthour and Merlin* :—

And taketh Constaunt, mi neldest sone,
And gif him bothe ring and crone ²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ *The Book of the Duchesse*, iii., 978-80.

²⁴⁶ W. B. D. D. Turnbull, *The Romance of Arthour and Merlin*, (Abbotsford Club, Edin., 1838), 75-6.

and :—

We haue you chosen our king,
And gouen you bothe croun and ring.²⁴⁷

In *King Athelstone*, the king is reported to say to the Archbishop :—

“ Thy mytyr and thy ryng that I to the gaff ”²⁴⁸

While further on in the story two knights say, on the king's behalf,—

“ And haue thy cros and thy ryng.”²⁴⁹

The restriction of the use of rings to bishops and pontiffs, as we have said, died out.

In some of these cases there is no mention of stones. We may, perhaps, conclude from two lines of Chaucer :—

“ Wel in the ring than is the ruby set ”²⁵⁰

and—

“ O ring, fro which the ruby is out-falle,”²⁵¹

that in nearly all cases, the rings were set with precious stones.

But there are many references in Middle-English verse to jewelled crowns and rings. One in the *Romaunt of the Rose* applies to Resoun :—

“ And on hir heed she hadde a crown
Hir semede wel an high persoun ;
For rounde enviroun, hir crownet
Was ful of riche stonis fret.”²⁵²

Another, in the *Legend* of Chaucer, speaks of the mighty god of love . . . and in his hond a quene,—

“ For of o perle fyn and oriental
Hir whyte coroun was y-maked al ; ”²⁵³

²⁴⁷ W. B. D. D. Turnbull, *The Romance of Arthour and Merlin*, 275-6.

²⁴⁸ C. H. Hartshorne, *op. cit.*, p. 20, 12.

²⁴⁹ *Ib.*, p. 23, 13.

²⁵⁰ *Troilus and Criseyde*, ii., 585.

²⁵¹ *Ib.*, v., 549.

²⁵² *Romaunt of the Rose*, 3201-4.

²⁵³ *Legend*, Prol. A, 153-4.

In the same poem is a reference to the " quene Alceste " and how :—

" In remembraunce of hir and in honour,
Cibella made the dayesy and the flour
Y-coroned al with whyt, as men may see ;
And Mars yaf to hir coroun reed, pardee,
In stede of rubies, set among the whyte." ²⁵⁴

Once again, in the *Legend*, Chaucer makes reference to a jewelled crown, and, in the story of Ariadne, we read :—

" And, in the signe of Taurus, men may see
The stones of her coroun shyne clere." ²⁵⁵

The Canterbury Tales give us a reference to a jewelled monarch, Ligurge, the grete king of Trace :—

" A wrethe of gold arm-greet, of huge wighte,
Upon his heed, set ful of stones brighte,
Of fyne rubies and of dyamaunts." ²⁵⁶

While yet one more reference of Chaucer's tells how Grisilde, a marquis' wife, was arrayed :—

" And in a cloth of gold that brighte shoon,
With a coroune of many a riche stoon
Up-on hir heed," ²⁵⁷

Other instances of the decoration of crowns with jewels are to be found in other authors of the period. In *William of Palerne*, the queen dreams of two harts :—

" & eiper hert on his hed · hadde, as hire pout,
a gret kroune of gold · ful of gode stones,
þat semli was to sigt · & schined ful wide." ²⁵⁸

and in describing the dream about Pluto, the author of *Sir Orpheo* writes :—

" The kyng had a crowne on his hede,
It was no selver ne gold rede,

²⁵⁴ *Legend*, Prol. A, 518-22.

²⁵⁵ *Ib.*, 2223-4.

²⁵⁶ *Knights Tale*, 2145-7.

²⁵⁷ *Clerkes Tale*, 1117-9.

²⁵⁸ W. W. Skeat, *The Romance of William of Palerne*, 2887-9.

All it was of precious stone,
As bryght as sunne forsothe it schone." ²⁵⁹

When Nectanabus impersonated the god of Lubyë—

"Of fin gold and of riche stones
A corone on his hed he bar." ²⁶⁰

In *Alisaunder of Macedoine*, we have—

"& precious stones
Wer sticked on þat stock ;" ²⁶¹

The King of France's present was a crown :—

"Biset withinne ant withoute
With preciouise stones al aboute," ²⁶²

In *Cursor Mundi* we read of King Solomon :—

"His riche croun o gold an(d) stan
Did first be of his heued tan," ²⁶³

and on the general question as to whether crowns were usually set with jewels, we have already quoted Chaucer, *The Book of the Duchesse*.

Gower, in speaking of Truth in the Seventh Book of his *Confessio Amantis*, refers to crowns in special connection with kings, and points out three special qualities of stones. The passage reads as follows :—

"For as a king in special
Above all othre is principal
Of his pouer, so scholde he be
Most vertuous in his degre ;
And that mai wel be signefied
Be his corone and specified.
The gold betokneth excellence,
That men schull don him reverence
As to here liege sovereign.

²⁵⁹ J. Ritson, *op. cit.*, *Sir Orpheo*, 147-50.

²⁶⁰ Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, Bk. vi., 2076-7.

²⁶¹ W. W. Skeat, *op. cit.*, 733-4.

²⁶² J. Ritson, *op. cit.*, *Chronicle of England*, 643-4.

²⁶³ *Cursor Mundi*, 9097-8.

The Stones, as the bokes sein,
 Commended ben in treble wise :
 Ferst thei ben harde, and thilke assisse
 Betokneth in a King Constance,
 So that ther schal no variance
 Be founde in his condicion ;
 And also be descripcion
 The vertu which is in the stones
 A verrai Signe is for the nones
 Of that a king schal ben honeste
 And holde trewly his beheste
 Of thing which longeth to kinghede :
 The bryhte colour, as I rede,
 Which in the stones is schynende,
 Is in figure betoknende
 The Cronique of this worldes fame,
 Which stant upon his goode name.
 The cercle which is round aboute
 Is tokne of al the lond withoute
 Which stant under his Gerarchie,
 That he it schal wel kepe and guye," ²⁶⁴

When we turn to the references to rings, we find the same history, although in later times the restriction of jewelled rings to royal and exalted persons died out. We are told by Gower in the tale of Lucius and the Statue that the image of the god had a ring, with a stone that is named—a Carbuncle :—

" Upon the which he hadde a ryng,
 To sen it was a riche thing,
 A fin Carbuncle for the nones
 Most precious of alle Stones." ²⁶⁵

The connection with royal persons can be traced in Gower's tale of Medea and Jason, where Medea used a ring of power, to help Jason :—

" Out of the which sche nam a Ring
 The Ston was worth all other thing." ²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ *Op. cit.*, Bk. vii., 1745-74.

²⁶⁵ *Ib.*, Bk. v., 7119-22 (S. text).

²⁶⁶ *Ib.*, 3561-2.

(the rest of the passage has been quoted already under the heading of *Stones and Magic*). The ring, too, which was used by Queen Braunden was magically powerful and was so potent that it protected against witchcraft, poison, and wiving wrongly. (The passage is given under *Stones and Magic*). In all these three passages, which refer to the use by divine or royal personages of jewelled rings, custom, with belief underlying it, is plainly indicated, and custom and belief can be seen in some passages from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* :—

"And with his salte teres gan he bathe
The ruby in his signet, and it sette
Upon the wex deliverliche and rathe ; " ²⁶⁷

"Ye, nece myn, that ring moste han a stoon
That mighte dede men alyve maken ;
And swich a ring, trowe I that ye have noon." ²⁶⁸

"And be ye wys, as ye ben fair to see,
Wel in the ring than is the ruby set." ²⁶⁹

"O ring, fro which the ruby is out-falle,"
O cause of wo, that cause hast been of lisse ! " ²⁷⁰

though in the last two quotations the use of the precious stone has become conventional or proverbial.

We are still dealing, in this last-quoted poem, with royal persons, but in *Piers Plowman* we find an allegorical person,—Mede,—wearing rings. In the earliest text,—the *A* text,—special mention is made of the use of "perre" by Princes :—

"Alle hir Fyue Fyngres · weore frettet with Rynges,
Of þe precioussest perre · þat prince wered euere ; " ²⁷¹

In the next text in order of date,—the *B* text,—the

²⁶⁷ *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. ii., 1086-8. ²⁶⁸ *Ib.*, Bk. iii., 891-3.

²⁶⁹ *Ib.*, Bk. ii., 584-5.

²⁷⁰ *Ib.*, Bk. v., 549-50.

²⁷¹ W. W. Skeat, *The Vision of William Concerning Piers Plowman* (E.E.T.S., O.S. 28, 38, 54 ; 1867, 1869, 1873), A. ii., 11-2.

object of the use of stones is stated to be to destroy poison :—

“ Fetislich hir fynGRES · were fretted with golde wyre,
And þere-on red rubyes · as red as any glede,
And diamantz of derrest pris ; and double manere safferes,
Orientales and ewages · envenymes to destroye.” ²⁷²

while in the latest recension of the poem,—the *C* text,—the writer reverts to a statement of fact without giving a motive :—

“ On alle hure fyue fynGRES · rycheliche yrynged,
And þer-on rede rubies · and oþer riche stones.” ²⁷³

There is no reason to doubt that the belief in the protection afforded by the possession of a ring set with a stone of ‘ vertu ’ was very real. It may be objected that in the Romances the subject of rings is introduced to amuse the hearers, and therefore must not be taken as evidence of a living belief in the powers of rings as amulets ; and, up to a point, the force of this objection may be admitted. But, when the author of *Piers Plowman* towards the latter end of the fourteenth century is writing about rings, and adds in his second version (*circ.* 1377 A.D.) the statement that Mede wore the stones to destroy poison, his sincerity as a satirist is evidence against any theory that the opinion was being recorded only for the amusement of the hearers. It is probable that in the *A* and *C* texts, although the object is not mentioned, the same idea of use as an amulet was present in the mind of the writer.

So far, the examples of rings with precious stones have been taken, for the most part, from divine or kingly wearers or owners : but passages of more general application are to be found. Chaucer, in his *Clerkes Tale*, mentions the use of gems by a marquis :—

“ But natheles this markis hath don make
Of gemmes, set in gold and in asure,
Broches and ringes, for Grisildis sake,” ²⁷⁴

²⁷² *Ib.*, B. ii., 11-4. ²⁷³ *Ib.*, C. iii., 12-3. ²⁷⁴ *Clerkes Tale*, 253-5.

In *Cursor Mundi* we have a more general reference :—

“ A golde ringe wiþ a briȝt stane.” ²⁷⁵

Of Clene Maydenhod also makes reference to rings and gems :—

“ þauȝ al þe gold of Arabye,
Riche Rynges and ȝymmes-stone,” ²⁷⁶

and :—

“ Hose þis ȝeem-ston miht
Louken in a swete loue-ryng.” ²⁷⁷

The use of a jewelled ring as an amulet is expressly mentioned in *Beues of Hamtoun*, where Josian speaks of :—

“ a ring on
þat of swiche vertu is the ston :
While ichaue on þat ilche ring,
To me schel noman haue welling.” ²⁷⁸

Reference has already been made to the story of *Ywaine and Gawin* where two passages mention rings (*Properties and Qualities* and *Stones and Healing*).

There remain, for notice, two passages about engraved stones, both from the story of Philip's Dream. The one, from *Alisaunder of Macedoine*, is :—

“ And with a gaie golde ring · hee gan it asele ;
A ston stiked þerein · stoutlich igraue ;
þe cast of þe sonne course · was corue þerin ;
A litle lioness hed · louelich ishape
With a swith faire swerd · sweetelich imaked,
Was isett on þe sell · þe seme all amiddes.” ²⁷⁹

and Gower, in his version of the same story, also tells of the engraving :—

“ Tok forth a ring, wherinne a ston
Was set, and grave therupon

²⁷⁵ *Cursor Mundi* (Fairfax MS.), 3320.

²⁷⁶ C. Horstmann, *The Minor Poems of the Vernon MS., Of Clene Maydenhod*, (E.E.T.S., O.S. 98, 117 ; 1892, 1901), 113-4.

²⁷⁷ *Ib.*, 121-2.

²⁷⁸ E. Kolbing, *op. cit.*, A. 1469-72.

²⁷⁹ W. W. Skeat, *op. cit.*, 829-34.

A Sonne, in which, whan he cam nyh,
A leoun with a swerd he sih ; " ²⁸⁰

It is worth recording that, in the two versions of " Engraved Stones," given in *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, the design of lion and sword, given in these two poems, is wanting.

We may notice that in three romances there are references to rings, also in *Cursor Mundi*, in " Of Clene Maydenhod," and in *Piers Plowman*. We conclude that the prevalence of custom and belief is wide.

Besides the fourteenth century passages which have been quoted, there are others from earlier and later centuries, which tell the same tale. In the lay of *Hauelok*, we read how Hauelok gives Ubbe a gold ring :—

" A gold ring drow he forth anon,
An hundred pund was worth þe ston," ²⁸¹

and in ' K. Horn,' Rymenhild gives to Horn an engraved stone :—

" Tak nu her pis gold ring
God him is þe dubbing ;
Ðer is upon the ringe
Igraue Rymenhild þe zonge :
Ðer nis non betere anonder sunne
Ðat eni man of telle cunne
For my luue þu hit were
And on þi finger þu him bere
Ðe stones beoþ of suche grace
Ðat þu ne schalt in none place
Of none dundes beon ofdrad
Ne on bataille beon amad :
Ef þu loke þeran
And þenke upon þi lemman.
And sire Apulf, þi broþer,
He schal haue anoþer." ²⁸²

²⁸⁰ *Confessio Amantis*, Bk. vi., 2145-8.

²⁸¹ W. W. Skeat, *The Lay of Havelok the Dane*, (E.E.T.S., Extra S. iv., 1868), 1632-3.

²⁸² J. R. Lunby, *King Horn*, (E.E.T.S., O.S. 14, 1866), 563-78.

These two passages show that the earlier periods breathe the same spirit as the verse of the fourteenth century and the passage from *King Horn* especially tallies remarkably well with the quotation given from *Ywaine and Gawin*.

The fifteenth-century verse continued the tradition. We read in the *Destruction of Troy* the story of Jason and Medea. Medea brings to Jason a charmed image; then an ointment to destroy venom and fire:—

“Than ho raught hym a ring with a riche stone,
 Pat no poison enpaire might, þe power is soche;
 And if it borne were in batell on his bare flesshe,
 He shulde slyde forth sleghly & vnslayn worthe.
 Achates it calde is with clene men of wit,
 And in Cicill forsothe sene was it first:
 Eneas it name & in note hade,
 Whan he to cartage come vnknowen with sight.”²⁸³

Then she added to her gifts a “bref” to “rede,” and a glass with liquor to throw into the mouth of the monsters. Jason accepted these, and, using them as he was instructed, then attacked the dragon:—

“The freike was a-ferd of þat felle beste,
 And raght to his Ryng in a rad haste,
 Held it high in his hond, þat he behold might.
 Ffor chynyng of the chene stone he shont with his hede,
 And with-droghe the deire of his dere attur;
 All dropet the dule as he degh wold.
 Dis stone full of strenght, as þe story tellus,
 Is erdand in Judé, as Isoder sais:
 Be it smethe owþer smerte, smaragden hit hat.
 Pere is no derffe dragon, ne no du edder,
 Ne no beste so bold with no bale atter,
 May loke on þe light, but he his lyffe tyne.
 Dis stone with his stremys stroyed all the venym,
 And drepit the dragon to the dethe negh.”²⁸⁴

It will be noticed that the stone which was at first called

²⁸³ Panton and Donaldson, *op. cit.*, 786-93.

²⁸⁴ Panton and Donaldson, *op. cit.*, 916-29.

Achates was afterwards named Smaragden : but we should not expect very great consistency in a tale of this nature, and may content ourselves by noticing that the essentials are there,—the power of the stone in the ring, its efficacy against poison, its value as an amulet if carried in battle, and its triumphant survival of the test to which Jason put it. It will also be noticed that, whereas in the former of the two passages there is ambiguity, since it is not specified whether the power belongs to the ring or to the stone, all doubt is removed by the latter, which twice speaks of the power of the stone.

One striking difference between the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* and the Middle-English allusions can be noted. In many cases in Anglo-Norman mention is made of engraved stones, while, in the majority of cases in English, no engraving is mentioned.

Of the Achates, it is stated in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* that Pyrrhus was in the habit of going in to battle with an engraved specimen ; and the *Lapidaries* can be brought as witness to the power of stones to deliver from prison, the special property of the stone given by the lady to Ywaine. The Anglo-Norman treatises attribute this property to several gems,—to the sapphire, the amethyst, the gagates, the opal, and the *pierre de corf*.

Custom, restricted or general, has been found to be frequently referred to ; and belief, which we can fairly assume from the evidence to be prevalent, is certainly present in those cases where the stones set in crowns and rings are expressly stated to possess value as amulets. The conclusion reached in the last section holds good again in this. Can we not assume, without forcing the evidence out of its proper meaning, that in those cases, where no amuletic 'vertu' is attributed to the gems, the original object of the use of jewelled crowns and rings was the protection afforded to the divine or kingly owner or wearer by the use of gems as amulets ?

Stones and Armour.

The armour of a fighting man in the fourteenth century was frequently decorated with precious stones, if we may judge from the number of instances recorded in the Middle-English poetry of that period.

Thus *Guy of Warwick* supplies the following references to helmets :—

“ The sercle of gold þer-on was wrouzt,
For half a cite no worþ it bouzt :
So mani stones þer-in were,
Þat were of vertu swiþe dere.” ²⁸⁵

“ An helme he hadde of michel miȝt
With a cercle of gold, þat schon briȝt,
Wiþ precious stones on rawe.
In þe frunt a char-bukel ston :
As briȝt as ani sonne it schon
Þat glemes vnder schawe.” ²⁸⁶

“ He had two helmȝ styf and bryȝt,
And two hawberkis for dred of fyȝt.
They were set with preciouȝe stonȝ
All a-bowte for the nonȝ.” ²⁸⁷

Other romances of the period give evidence to the same effect. The author of *Reinbrun Gij sone of Warwike* tells us :—

“ On þe front stod a charbokel ston :
Ouer al þe contre it schon
Wiþ-outen eni doute.” ²⁸⁸

In *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight* we read :—

þe cercle watȝ more o prȝs,
þat vmbe-clypped hys croun,
Of diamaunteȝ a deuȝs,
þat boþe were bryȝt & broun.” ²⁸⁹

²⁸⁵ Zupitza, *op. cit.*, Auch, 3857-60.

²⁸⁶ *Ib.*, 249-7-12.

²⁸⁷ *Ib.*, Caius, 9658-61.

²⁸⁸ Zupitza, *op. cit.*, 80-7-9.

²⁸⁹ R. Morris, *Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight*, 615-8.

Sire Degarre and *Arthur and Merlin* contain the following passages :—

“ Sire Degarre and his squier
Armed him in riche atir,
Wiz an helme riche for the nones,
Was ful of precious stones.” ²⁹⁰

and :—

“ Leodegan and alle his ost
Armed hem in aketouns,
Hauberkes, plates, and hauberiouns ;
Bothe with bacin and eke palet,
And helme on her heued y-set ;
Stones precious and gimmes,
Gold and siluer ther were inne ;” ²⁹¹

The foregoing quotations all refer to helms, but another passage which describes, not actually the helm, but the camail that covered the neck behind, may be quoted here from *Winner and Waster* :—

“ Bot that þat hillede the helme by-hynde in the nekke,
Was casten full clenly in quarteres foure—
Two with flowres of Fraunce be-fore and be-hynde,
And two oþer of Ynglonde with sex irous bestes,
Thre leberdes one lofte, and thre on-lowe vndir :
At iche a cornere a knoppe of full clene perle,
Tasselde of tuly silke, tuttynge out fayre.” ²⁹²

It might be thought that helms decorated in such costly fashion would be reserved for occasions of ceremony, but in the fight described in *Guy of Warwick* :—

“ On helmes & on briȝt scheldes ;
So hard þai striken hem bitvene,
Þat gode stones fallen þer ben,” ²⁹³

²⁹⁰ D. Laing, *Sire Degarre*, (Abbotsford Club, Edin., 1849), 1012-5.

²⁹¹ W. B. D. D. Turnbull, *op. cit.*, 8674-80.

²⁹² I. Gollancz, *Winner and Waster*, (*Selected Early English Poems*, 1920), 76-82.

²⁹³ Zupitza, *op. cit.*, Auch, 2220-2.

they were clearly taken on to the field of battle, while, further on in the same romance, we have a description of a contest between Sir Amoraunt and Guy :—

“ & hitt him on þe helme so briȝt,
 Þat alle þe stones of michel miȝt
 Fleyȝe down in þe feld.” ²⁹⁴

Yet once more we read of the fight between Colbrond and Guy :—

“ On his helm he hit him þo,
 Þat his floures euer-ichon
 & his gode charbukel ston
 Wel euen he carf atvo : ” ²⁹⁵

Nor is the evidence all contained in one poem. In two places in *Ferumbras* we read of jewelled helms used in actual combat. When *Ferumbras* fought with Oliver, the clash of arms is described :—

“ Al anoneward þe helm an heȝ : ys crest a bar adoun,
 & þe cercele of gold þat sat þer-bey : þe perles wer
 worþ a toun,
 & of ys auantaile wyþ þat stroke : a carf wel many
 a maylle.” ²⁹⁶

and later on, Roland and Moradas fight with swords :—

“ Þe cercles þat were on hur helmes set : of perre
 y-mad & golde,
 Þey bern hem down wiþ-oute let : ne miȝt pay noȝt
 with-holde.” ²⁹⁷

In *Ywaine and Gawin*, of the combat between these two knights, the author tells us :—

“ On helmes thai gaf slike strakes kene,
 That the riche stanes albidene,
 And other ger that was ful gude,
 Was over-covered al in blode.” ²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ Zupitza, *op. cit.*, Auch, 100-4-6.

²⁹⁵ *Ib.*, 262-3-6.

²⁹⁶ S. J. Herrtage, *op. cit.*, 622-4.

²⁹⁷ *Ib.*, 1600-1.

²⁹⁸ J. Ritson, *op. cit.*, “ Ywaine and Gawin,” 3545-8.

The fourteenth-century evidence does not, moreover, stand alone. An earlier reference to the subject occurs in *Lazamon's Brut* :—

“ Halm he set on hafde :
Hoeh of stele.
Ʒer ð wes moni Ʒim-ston :
al mid golde bi-gon.” ²⁹⁹

and a later reference is found in *Morte Arthure* (alliterative) :—

“ Wyth clasppis of clere golde, couched wyth stones ; ” ³⁰⁰

Tradition, too, dating from the fifteenth century also confirms the use in battle of precious stones, for we read in Sir G. S. Laking, the authority upon armour, the following :—

“ To follow the subject further, in the Crown of England we can point to a ruby of great beauty of colour, which, according to tradition, was worn by Henry V in his helmet at Agincourt in 1415.” ³⁰¹

If we turn to modern comment on this branch of the subject, we find that Sir G. S. Laking, the authority upon armour, writes :—

“ Many of these fluted and otherwise decorated bascinets must originally have been most richly studded with jewels, and garnished with gold and enamel of which, at a later date, they were doubtless despoiled.” ³⁰²

and again :

“ The decoration of the helmet, not only that of bascinet, but of every form of headpiece, was in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, carried to an extreme.” ³⁰³

²⁹⁹ Sir F. Madden, *op. cit.*, 21141-4.

³⁰⁰ E. Brock, *op. cit.*, 909.

³⁰¹ Sir G. S. Laking, *European Armour and Arms*, vol. i., pp. 232-3.

³⁰² *Ib.*, chap. viii., pp. 231-2.

³⁰³ *Ib.*

So far, in this section, we have dealt only with helms. But, if we turn to other parts of a knight's armour, we are able to produce evidence of the same kind.

For the sword, we have two quotations from *Guy of Warwick* and one from *Beues of Hamton* :—

“ In þe hilt was mani precious ston,” ³⁰⁴
and—

“ Of charbukel þe pomel,” ³⁰⁵
and—

“ Þe pomel was off charbocle ston,
A betere swerd was neuere non.” ³⁰⁶

But the attitude of the true warrior is revealed in the exclamation of Guy of Warwick, when he finds the treasure in the cave :—

“ Of alle þis riche tresore
Y no kepe þerof no more
Bot þis brond of stiel.” ³⁰⁷

One feels, that if the choice had to be made between the treasure and the steel, it would be the steel that would be chosen by Sir Guy.

Sir G. S. Laking makes several references to the custom of decorating swords and their scabbards with precious stones. In describing one of the fourteenth century, he writes :—

“ To this sword there was formerly a golden scabbard, adorned with pearls and precious stones.” ³⁰⁸

For the decoration of the shield, Chaucer and the author of *Sir Tristrem* can be called as witnesses :—

“ His sheeld was al of gold so reed,
And ther-in was a bores heed,
A charbocle bisyde ;” ³⁰⁹

³⁰⁴ Zupitza, *op. cit.*, Auch, 164-4.

³⁰⁵ *Ib.*, 167-3.

³⁰⁶ E. Kölbing, *op. cit.*, E. 4313-117-8.

³⁰⁷ Zupitza, *op. cit.*, Auch, 167-7-9.

³⁰⁸ Sir G. S. Laking, *op. cit.*, vol. i., p. 138, *cf.* pp. 16, 21, 99, 101.

³⁰⁹ *Sir Thopas*, 2059-61.

The dragon by develin toun :—

“ Swiche fer he cast oȝain
ȝat brend scheld and ston.” ³¹⁰

These passages can be paralleled in the fifteenth century by one from the *Destruction of Troy* :—

“ Fight full of prise stonys vmbe the pure sydes ” ³¹¹
and by two from the *Morte Arthure* (alliterative) :—

“ A charebocle in the cheefe, chawngawnde of hewes,” ³¹²
and—

“ And chekyrde with charebocle chawngynge of hewes ; ” ³¹³

A passage in the *Knichtes Tale* refers to the cote-armure and mantelet of Emetreus of Inde, who came with Palamon and Arcite to the tournament :—

“ His cote-armure was of cloth of Tars,
Couched with perles whyte and rounde and grete.
His sadel was of brend gold newe y-bete ;
A mantelet upon his shuldre hanginge
Bret-ful of rubies rede, as fyr sparklinge.” ³¹⁴

A similar passage referring to cote-armure is to be found in *Ferumbras* :—

“ Oppon is armure was he clad : wyþ a cote-armure
clene,
Of cloþ of gold it was mad : & embrouded with
perlis schene.” ³¹⁵

From the fifteenth century we have, too, a description of a chariot and its cloth, from the *Destruction of Troy* :—

“ This Philon the fre kyng, ȝat I fyrst nemyt,
Hade a chariot full choise, as ȝe chalke wyte,

³¹⁰ C. P. MacNeill, *Sir Tristrem*, (Scottish Text Soc., Edin., 1856), 1475-6.

³¹¹ Panton and Donaldson, *op. cit.*, 5501.

³¹² E. Brock, *op. cit.*, 2523.

³¹³ *Ib.*, 3267.

³¹⁴ *Knichtes Tale*, 2160-4.

³¹⁵ S. J. Hertridge, *op. cit.*, 552-3.

All of yuer full onest, ordant for hym ;
 And the whelis full wheme, all of white aumber.
 Couert with a cloth all of clene gold,
 Dubbit full of diamondis, & oþer dere stones,
 Fframet ouer fresshly with frettes of perle." ³¹⁶

So we have found, in a number of representative romances, ample evidence for the custom of wearing precious stones in the various parts of a knight's armour ; and, further, especially in the case of helms, evidence for the custom of carrying jewelled armour into battle.

We can now look below the surface and see whether we can find the reason for the custom itself. Sir G. S. Laking refers to a suggestion as to the origin of the lobed pommel:—

"It has been suggested," he writes, "with some degree of likelihood, that at the time when the flat oval pommel was in fashion . . . the fighting man used to bind a relic or charm to counteract misfortunes or strengthen his arm, and from this habit the lobed pommel was evolved." ³¹⁷

When we sum up the evidence we have collected from the verse of the fourteenth century, we find that the cumulative effect of so many references to the wearing of stones in connection with arms and battle is great ; and, even if there were no direct evidence on the question, the inference would be forced upon us that these precious stones representing high values were worn for the express purpose of serving as amulets : without some such practical object, it is hard to imagine that they would have been risked on a battlefield.

But in the *Political Poems and Songs* (Rolls Series) direct evidence is forthcoming, and it is so much to the purpose that we quote it :—

"Frangentur capita ducum gemmis redimita
 Non margarita salvabitur a nece vita." ³¹⁸

³¹⁶ Panton and Donaldson, *op. cit.*, 6200-6.

³¹⁷ Sir G. S. Laking, *op. cit.*, vol. i., p. 18.

³¹⁸ T. Wright, *Chronicles and Memorials*, (*Rolls Series*) *Political Poems and Songs*, "John of Bridlington," vol. i., (1859), chap. ii., vv. 6-7.

To verify this conclusion, we can turn once more to the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, and we find that there is a great contrast to be seen in this section between the English poets and the Anglo-Norman scientists. Both describe the customary use of jewels; but the former describe the decoration of various parts of the armour without explicitly stating the purpose for which the stones are used, while the latter say much about the custom of carrying the stones into battle, but give far less attention to the particular part of the armour which is adorned. The explanation is more often given by the scientist, though it should be pointed out that in some cases the stone is not carried to the field of battle, but is used beforehand either to strengthen the sight, or in a kind of crystal gazing. It is worth remarking that no fewer than eighteen stones are mentioned in *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, by name, as being useful for battle, many of them for actual use on the battlefield.

Particular examples may be given. Thus the use of Achates makes a man feared by his enemies.³¹⁹ Sapphirus was said to be worn by kings in order that they might be more secure in battle.³²⁰ Chalcedony gives victory in battle, apparently by preventing the chain-mail of the wearer's hauberk from breaking.³²¹ If a man wears *gagatromaeus* in battle, he will be able to chase his enemies and no one will dare to touch him.³²²

So we see that the deductions drawn from the references to precious stones in the English verse are confirmed and amplified by the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*.

³¹⁹ *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, V.A., 192.

³²⁰ *Ib.*, T.P., iii., 17-18.

³²¹ *Ib.*, V.A., 471-2.

³²² *Ib.*, F.F.V., 576-8.

Conclusion.

Before we gather up the results of the investigation that has been carried out, it may be useful, and it certainly will be interesting, to look at some references of the period we have been considering to a subject which is now regarded as belonging entirely to the province of pure science.

If we set out some quotations on the subject of eclipses, we shall have material which will serve to compare with what we have collected on precious stones.

"The comune errour moeveth folk, and maketh wery hir basins of bras by thikke strokes ; that is to seyn, that ther is a maner of poeple, that highte Coribantes, that wenen that, whan the mone is in the eclipse, that it be enchaunted ; and therfore, for to rescowe the mone, they beten hir basins with thikke strokes." ³²³

The author of *Piers Plowman*, writing of the Crucifixion, says,—

"Which deyde & deth poled · þis day aboute mydday
And þat is cause of þis clips · þat closeth now þe sonne." ³²⁴

Gower in three separate places deals with the subject of eclipse, referring to two beliefs ; first, that eclipses are sicknesses of the Sun and Moon ; and, second, that they can be caused by magic. Of the first belief,—when, in the Prologue of the *Confessio Amantis*, he is dealing with man's Fall,—the following passage occurs :

"Whan that he fell, thei fellen eke,
Whan he wax sek, thei woxen seke ;
For as the man hath passioun
Of seknesse, in comparisoun
So soffren othre creatures.

³²³ W. W. Skeat, *The Vision of William, etc.*, Ch. Boeth IV., m, 5L, 16-23.

³²⁴ B. xviii., 134-5 ; cf. C. xxi., 139-40.

Lo, ferst the hevenly figures,
The Sonne and Mone eclipsen bothe ;
And ben with mannes senne wrothe ; ” ³²⁵

and again, in the description of the Belief of the Chal-
deans :—

“ And ek, if men hem wel avise,
The Sonne and Mone eclipse bothe,
That be hem lieve or be hem lothe,
Thei soffre ; and what thing is passible
To ben a god is impossible.” ³²⁶

He refers to the second belief in his eighth book, *The Companies of Lovers* :—

“ And that was Circes and Calipse,
That cowthen do the Mone eclipse,
Of men and change the liknesses,
Of Artmagique Sorceresses ; ” ³²⁷

We read in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, too, that with
heliotropium, one can cause eclipses :—

“ *De Eliotropia*

Metex la encuntre soleil
En un vaisel, sil fait vermeil ;
Ce ert avis ki la tendra
Ke novels eclipses sera ” ³²⁸

or

“ Eliotropia est de tele nature que se hom la met en vaise
encontre le soleil, ele fait le soleil devenir ruge et si fait nuvel
eclipsim ; ” ³²⁹

³²⁵ *Confessio Amantis*, Prologue, 913-20.

³²⁶ *Confessio Amantis*, Bk. v., 768-72.

³²⁷ *Ib.*, Bk. viii., 2599-602.

³²⁸ First French Version, 601-4.

³²⁹ *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, First Prose, xxiv., 1-3.

But, together with these quotations, there is one from the *Romaunt of the Rose* that gives a very fair account of a lunar eclipse. It is as follows (speaking of Fortune) :—

“ For it shal chaungen wonder sone,
 And take eclips right as the mone,
 Whan she is from us (y)-let
 Thurgh erthe, that bitwixe is set
 The sonne and hir, as it may falle,
 Be it in party, or in alle ;
 The shadowe maketh her bemis merke,
 And hir hornes to shewe derke,
 That part where she hath lost the lyght
 Of Phebus fully, and the sight ;
 Til, whan the shadowe is overpast,
 She is enlumined ageyn as faste,
 Thurgh brightnesse of the sonne bemes
 That yeveth to hir ageyn hir lemes.” ³³⁰

In these quotations, we find recorded :—

1. A translation from Boethius, setting out in English prose the substance of a statement made some 800 years earlier, concerning the custom of the Coribantes, who used to beat basons of metal during an eclipse of the moon in order to rescue the moon from the state of eclipse : this is said to be based on the belief that the moon is enchanted.

2. The darkness recorded in the Gospel story of the Crucifixion is attributed by the author of *Piers Plowman* to an eclipse of the sun, although the moon at the time was at the full.

3. The eclipses are spoken of by Gower as sicknesses of the sun and moon.

4. The belief that an eclipse of the moon can be induced by magic is also reported by Gower.

5. Two quotations from the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* about heliotropia and its reputed power of causing eclipse.

³³⁰ *Romaunt of the Rose*, 5333-46.

6. A very good description of a lunar eclipse is given in the *Romaunt of the Rose*, where the eclipse is explained as being due to the earth's shadow darkening the moon.

We have in these references several aspects of a natural phenomenon ranging from old beliefs in the enchantment of the moon, through a symbolic explanation of the event as a sickness, to a description of the passing of the earth between the sun and the moon,—from ideas that are primitive to such as are based on actual observation and sound logical deduction. In short, in this matter we find a curious medley of ideas presented to us in the literature of the period.

This medley of ideas prepares our mind for finding the same varieties of thought,—some bad, some indifferent, and some good,—in the matter of precious stones. We shall have to be ready to discard some of the explanations according to our angle of approach to the subject. If we consider the question from the scientific standpoint, most of the evidence is worthless ; if, however, we examine the evidence from the anthropological side, most of what we find will be of use to us ; as we saw in the explanations of eclipses, most of the references give interesting details as to the beliefs current about eclipses in the middle ages.

We notice that, in the quotations on the subject of precious stones, the references to custom have a wide range.

If we begin by considering the centuries preceding the fourteenth, we find customs referred to in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, in *Lazamon's Brut*, and in the *Early South English Legendary*, in *Hauelok* and *King Horn*. These references would lead us to suppose that it was customary to use gems in fairly large numbers for various purposes connected with many of man's activities. We may wonder how great the consumption of precious stones, by means of crushing, or scraping away, or dissolving, may have been : but it is clearly set out in the *Anglo-Norman*

Lapidaries that certain benefits were to be obtained by those means ; and, whether the quantity of stones so used was large or small, the obvious conclusion is that the descriptions of their use had some foundation in fact. We should, however, bear in mind that statements made about precious stones might go unchallenged by the people to whom they were made, solely on account of the rarity of the gems.

When we turn to the verse of the fourteenth century, we find a large number of references to similar customs. The customs may, or may not, be increasing ; from the references in the romances, the chronicles, the satires of the day, we see that the customs mentioned in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are continued into the fourteenth, and we find later references to similar customs from the succeeding centuries.

When we carry our examination somewhat deeper, we find that in the earlier period the customs certainly rested upon beliefs in the value of stones as amulets. These beliefs give an appearance of reason to the customs ; and we must bear in mind what we have just seen in the case of eclipses, that all statements and all beliefs have not equal value. Some may be entitled to be considered scientific, even in the present signification of that word, as the statement about the eclipse of the moon from the *Romaunt of the Rose* ; others may have no more value than the belief in the property possessed by Eliotropia of causing eclipse.

The beliefs, we have said, give an appearance of reason to the customs. These beliefs are not very fully described in the Middle-English verse ; but, on the other hand, there is a very large body of belief set out in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* ; and this body of belief is, in the main, attested by the references in the Middle-English verse of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

In any period when a belief is flourishing, it is com-

paratively easy to get full information about it. In the case of a taboo, for instance, that is so far believed in that it is acted upon, one would be told on enquiry that to break the taboo would have the effect of bringing some particular calamity upon the individual or community responsible for the breach, or upon the place where the taboo was broken. As an example:—there is a spot on the side of a mountain in North Wales, not far from Llanwchllyn, called Castell Carn-Dochan, where a treasure was reputed to be hidden. One must not dig for that treasure, for to do so would bring on a violent thunder-storm.

When a belief such as this weakens, the answer given to an enquirer would probably be softened down into the general statement that it is unlucky to dig for that treasure ; and, after some long continuance of the weakening process, a later enquiry as to the reason why it is unlucky would not receive any satisfactory reply, owing to the details of the effect of the taboo having been forgotten. One stage further upon the road of decay, and the superstition itself is altogether forgotten.

We may note that in the fourteenth century many of the statements about precious stones take a general form, such as Gower's

“ In ston and gras vertu ther is,”

or Chaucer's

“ Wo worth the faire gemme vertulees,”

and, in these and similar cases, superstitions seem to be losing their crispness : yet, on the other hand, we find a good many statements such as

“ Of which the propre vertu is ”

which Gower in his *Confessio Amantis* used of the *Lapis vegetabilis*, the first of the philosophers' stones.

Such a body of belief as is contained in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* is only dimly reflected in the literary pro-

ductions of the fourteenth century. It is quite likely that, if real access to the people were possible, it would be found that many of the beliefs recorded in *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* were still powerful and firmly held by the illiterate, or even by the literate among the higher classes, for we must remember that the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries* present the science of the period in which the various lapidaries were written, say the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and so would appeal to the learned of the people.

However, although many statements are representative only of the fading stage of superstition, there remains quite enough to trace the main lines of a vivid and almost unquestioning belief, such as that depicted in the *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*.

The evidence may indicate that belief is decaying; but enough is said in the verse of the fourteenth century to show that there existed then a great deal of belief in the amuletic qualities of precious stones; these qualities were referred to as 'vertu' or might. The recognition of this 'vertu' varied, of course, with individuals,—“diverse folk diversely they demed;”³³¹—it is extremely difficult to estimate public opinion at the present day; it is certainly not less difficult to weigh that of five centuries ago. But there are so many instances in the romances of precious stones used as amulets, that it must be admitted that a substantial amount of belief underlay these, more especially as this theory is supported by some further quotations from works other than romances.

In history it is recorded that extravagance in dress increased during the fourteenth century, and that in 1363 a sumptuary law was passed, with the object of restricting this extravagance. This suggests the question:—“Was this increase of extravagance due entirely to love of display? Or was there not in it an element of belief in magic and of trust in the virtues of amulets?”

³³¹ *Squieres Tale*, 202.

May not the answer to this question supply in some measure the reason why the law was found to be, to a great extent, inoperative? If men fear the future and believe in amulets, they will venture to disobey a law which would tend to restrict their liberty. In connection with a point of this nature, there seems every reason to suppose that anthropological research would benefit by numerous small contributions to our knowledge, and that history, too, would gain by the sidelights that anthropology might throw on the canvas on which writers of history are working, if a systematic reading of our literature from century to century were undertaken with the purpose of recording custom and belief and tracing them through the writings of all periods from the early right up to the present time.

To return to the special subject of precious stones, if general belief in the amuletic value of precious stones existed, it can further be admitted that such customs as those of wearing stones in rings and clothing appeared quite logical, and pre-eminently practical. Instances of the utility of gems can be multiplied. By looking at one stone, you profit so much by its 'power' that you can overcome your enemy in battle; by burning another, you can strike terror into the hearts of the people whose house you wish to rob; by sprinkling the powdered remnants of a third, you can cure your sheep of disease or ensure a good crop from your vines.

Credulity and a shrewd regard for practical utility preceded the desire for verification of beliefs or for the testing of conclusions. In some of the items which reflect popular belief in Pepys' *Diary*, or some of the passages in Sir Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia*, there can be seen emerging a spirit of investigation, which was almost entirely wanting three centuries earlier. The spirit of the Middle Ages is reflected very strikingly in the quotations set out.

In the examination of the evidence connected with gems,

three periods have been considered; the period which preceded the fourteenth century, then the fourteenth century itself, and, thirdly, the fifteenth and later centuries. The meaning that should be attached to gems and the customs and beliefs connected with them have been discussed, and the question asked whether the opinion of the Middle Ages should be adopted, or that of the present, as put forward by Professor Ridgeway.

The evidence recorded from the first period made it appear probable that there existed something far more coherent than a set of disconnected beliefs, with no more bond of union than that they were all concerned with the possession and use of precious stones. The quotations suggested, rather, that these beliefs were all bound together in a system of belief in the virtue of amulets and carriers of good luck. It might be hard to say how wide this system spread, how far it belonged to the individual, rather than to the whole community. The quotations indicate rather a system held by individuals than by the community, though it would be dangerous to generalize on the subject from the consideration of the particular case of gems.

In the verse of the fourteenth century, there is much which, taken by itself, may merely be a record of personal superstitions and opinions. In it there is but little to show whether the quotations had reference to any body of belief of an organized or coherent nature. Very little explanation is given in the passages quoted; the records of the earlier period may be borne in mind, and they suggest that the beliefs recorded were more or less connected with an earlier system of belief in amulets and good luck.

In quotations from later periods, too, there is continuity of tradition. They bear witness, for the most part, to a state of belief similar to that which prevailed in the fourteenth century, but the opinions expressed are no longer accepted always without discussion, and the

amuletic or magic beliefs seem rather to form part of the personal equipment of individuals than to be integral portions of a wide-spread system, and are certainly not the property of the whole community.

But there were, among the references, four passages which may serve as clues to lead us to a more perfect understanding of the minds of the authors whose writings we have been considering. One is that in which it is asserted, in Latin, that life shall not be made safe by the pearl; that the heads of the leaders shall be broken, in spite of the gems. Two others, also in Latin, promise that on the day on which you have seen the picture of St. Christopher, you will not die of 'mala mors,' or will be safe. The fourth, in English of the fifteenth century, tells how the gold of the cups would prove an amulet against poison, or the venom should fail through 'vertu' of the stones. These four quotations illuminate the whole subject: and seem to connect the comparatively colourless English verse references of the fourteenth century with a systematic belief of an earlier period by the suggestion of a people steeped in a pervading belief in amulets. We can see the men of the period, not only as individuals, but perhaps as part of the community, lending their faith to precious stones, trusting to them for protection against sickness and wounds; for the healing of disease; turning to them for aid in magic practices; relying upon them for increasing the product of their agricultural toil, and the truth of this vision is confirmed by such evidence as is afforded by the specimens which still exist of mediæval armour, and crowns and rings adorned with jewels.

Our ancestors were credulous, and sunk in superstition; but, such credulity granted, was it not very logical that they should feel secure amidst the dangers they had to meet in their daily life, and, confident in credulity, were they not better fitted to overcome the dangers, by meeting them with stout heart?

This vision would be strengthened, in all probability, if a similar work could be carried out in other parts of the field of fourteenth-century verse: if investigation could be made into the customs and beliefs connected with other subjects, such as lightning, trees, or birds, and the history and relationships of these customs and beliefs. There is good reason to suppose that the results achieved would be cumulative, and that our understanding of the mental processes of our ancestors would be more and more increased the more widely and deeply this investigation were carried out. If time and opportunity for the research should prove to be forthcoming, it would be a pleasing task to venture forth to seek and discover.

P. J. HEATHER.